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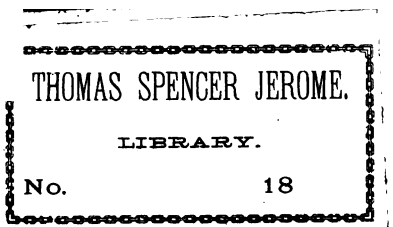
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SOAP BUBBLES

BY

MAX NORDAU

Author of "Degeneration," "Comedy of Sentiment," "The Right to Love," "How Women Love," Etc.

TRANSLATED BY MARY J. SAFFORD



F. TENNYSON NEELY

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CANT AND HUMBUG.

Our train had pulled out of Ostend a few minutes before. The carriage in which I had my seat contained its regular complement of six passengers, all of whom, with the exception of myself, belonged to the Anglo-Saxon race. We had scarcely left the station when tongues were loosed, and an animated general conversation began, which enabled me to recognize my companions by their shrill, loud tones and some-

what nasal accents, as Americans. The only person who took no share in the talk was a portly gentleman dressed in a traveling suit of conspicuous style, who had placed his numerous articles of baggage in the net with small regard for the effects of his fellow mortals, then settled himself comfortably in a corner by the window and, after a swift, searching glance at the other inmates of the railway carriage, began to scan the somewhat monotonous landscape. Remarks which were indirectly addressed to him were so utterly ignored that it would have been supposed he did not understand English, had he not said—when one of the Americans was preparing to light a

cigar — in unmistakable English and very emphatically :

“I object to your smoking, sir ; I am not aware that this is a smoking carriage.”

The Englishman's bluntness and reserve evidently did not suit the taste of the Americans, for they began to exchange pointed remarks about the inhospitable social customs of the “Britishers,” their awkwardness in their intercourse with others, and their punctilious formality in social, political and religious matters, of which, however, the Englishman took no more notice than he had formerly done of the indirect attempts to draw him into the conversation.

“I heard a story in London

which describes the Britisher better than a whole library could do," exclaimed one of the Yankees who had been among the loudest talkers.

"Out with it! Hear! Hear!" cried the others in chorus, casting scornful glances at the Englishman. The latter did not appear to notice it, he was gazing very intently at a windmill, whose bizarre outline was relieved against the horizon.

"I must premise that the story is true, and that I met one of the heroes only yesterday evening in London—my friend, Mr. Brown, from whom I had it. This Mr. Brown was obliged, two years ago, to take a business journey to Chili. He secured passage on

one of the boats of the Pacific Steam Navigation Co., and arrived without incident at Montevideo, where several more passengers came on board. Beyond Punta Arenas a terrible storm suddenly burst upon them, which first broke the helm, then swept the smokestack from the deck, and finally shattered the screw. The vessel was now a total wreck, the sport of the wind and waves, and, after drifting aimlessly in the storm for several hours, it was at last flung upon a reef, where it stuck fast. The captain, who had not lost his calmness and presence of mind for a moment, ordered the lifeboats to be lowered, and remained on board until the last

passenger and the last sailor had left the ship. The boats vainly endeavored to make their way through the surges thundering upon the reef. One after another was caught beneath the combing surf and overturned, a cry of despair was heard above the howling of the tempest, then the boat, keel uppermost, drifted in one direction, while in another faces distorted by fear and hands clenched convulsively appeared above the foam-flecked water only to vanish speedily. The boat Mr. Brown entered shared the fate of the rest, but when it upset my friend and another passenger clung to the edge and, with tremendous effort, climbed up so that they sat astride of the sharp

keel. In this horrible situation, one behind the other, they remained for several hours till the wayes, whose violence had now somewhat subsided, at last flung them on the flat, sandy shore of a small island. The immediate peril of death was now over, but Mr. Brown considered his situation a very melancholy one. He had no taste for literary renown, and did not find the slightest consolation for the financial loss which he must inevitably meet if he did not reach Valparaiso at a certain time, in the thought that he would eventually be celebrated as another Robinson Crusoe. However, he tried to accommodate himself to the situation as well as he could. After resting

a short time and drying his clothes in the sun, he went on an investigating tour through the island, which was not more than a league in circumference. He discovered without difficulty that it was uninhabited, but contained a sufficient quantity of fruit trees, birds' nests, shells, springs and caves to sustain the life of a shipwrecked person. So he immediately prepared a sort of nest for himself of moss and leaves at the foot of a large tree, and calmly accommodated himself to the necessity of living here until some lucky accident should deliver him from his unpleasant position. His companion in misfortune had pursued precisely the same course as Mr. Brown. He,

too, after a tour of investigation had found a tolerably habitable grotto, in which he made himself at home."

"But it would have been far more natural for them to live together," remarked one of the listeners.


"It's evident, Brother Josh, that you have lived in Europe only a week and don't understand English customs. How could Mr. Brown speak to the other shipwrecked passenger, associate with him, or live in the same cave, when they had not been introduced to each other?"

The Americans laughed, while the Englishman appeared to be more than ever absorbed in gazing at the landscape.

“Several weeks,” the speaker continued, “elapsed in cheerless monotony. Every morning the two shipwrecked men left their beds of moss and washed at the only large spring in the island, during which they looked coldly at each other, then they went in search of a few eggs, shells and roots for breakfast, after which, of course, without taking the slightest notice of each other, they met on the narrow top of a high rock which projected into the sea and sat there silently for hours, scanning the horizon with anxious eyes, always hoping to discover a distant sail. For a long time this hope was unfulfilled. At last, after they had spent nearly two months and a half on the island, Mr.

Brown had scarcely stationed himself at his usual post of observation when he thought he saw, at the farthest verge of the horizon, a dark, moving spot. Starting up, as if he had received an electric shock, he shaded his eyes with his hand and gazed until he could no longer doubt that what he beheld was the trail of smoke from a steamer. His companion, whose attention had been attracted by Mr. Brown's vehement movements, followed the direction of his eyes, and a faint 'Oh!' which he suddenly uttered revealed that he, too, had discovered the ship. Both now transformed all their garments, coats, vests, shirts, flannel jackets, into flags, which they waved frantically with both hands.

But it needed no special exertions to bring the steamer which was in sight to the island. As they learned afterward, some of the men shipwrecked on their own vessel had succeeded in righting one of the overturned boats, getting into it, and, after unspeakable hardships, reaching the mainland, where they brought tidings of the catastrophe. A ship was sent to the scene of the disaster as quickly as possible to search for any survivors of the wreck, and it was this vessel which Mr. Brown and his companion had discovered on the morning described. After two hours of excitement and anxiety, the rescuing steamer came so near that a boat put off for the two involuntary



islanders. They rushed down to the flat, sandy tongue of land where the boat had touched, and a few minutes later, comfortably seated in it, were on their way to the steamer. The captain stood near the man-rope, waiting for them, greeted them with a silent bow and a clasp of the hand, and requested them to accompany him to his cabin. Here he placed a register before them and asked them to write their names and residences. The stranger who had been Mr. Brown's companion on the island was the first to comply with the request, as he happened to be standing nearer to the table. After making the desired entries he yielded the pen to my friend Brown, who, before beginning to

write himself, glanced mechanically at the lines which had just been inscribed in the book. Scarcely had he read them when a strange emotion suddenly overpowered him. 'Mr. William Lloyd Jones, Valparaiso!' he exclaimed aloud in a tremulous voice, then, turning to the gentleman who stood beside him, he added: 'Are you Mr. W. L. Jones?' 'Yes,' replied the other curtly, looking at him with surprise and disapproval. 'Oh, in that case,'—and Mr. Brown thrust his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, whence he drew out a letter,—'in that case I have a letter of introduction to you from our mutual friend, Mr. Smith, in London.' While speaking, Mr. Brown handed Mr. Jones his 'in-

troduction,' whose address, it is true, was somewhat effaced by the sea-water, but was still perfectly legible. Mr. Jones methodically unfolded the paper, read it through attentively, and when he had reached his friend Smith's signature his hitherto stern face suddenly brightened, he turned to Brown with overwhelming cordiality, shook him vigorously by both hands, and exclaimed again and again: 'Very happy to make your acquaintance, really very happy!' Brown struck himself on the forehead: 'To think that I could not give you my introduction on the island!' 'It is a pity, certainly,' observed Jones; 'we might have spent some very pleasant hours together.' The captain—also an

Englishman—who had listened all the time in silence, guessed the connection of affairs without difficulty, and, after this little scene, was perfectly convinced that he was dealing with thorough gentlemen. Brown and Jones became the best possible friends, and even now, though one is living in London and the other in Valparaiso, maintain a very active correspondence."

During the last few sentences of the story the American listeners gave way to noisy mirth, which lasted several minutes after the speaker stopped. When the outburst of hilarity was at last followed by silence, we saw the Englishman—who until then had sat in his corner with an expres-

sion of the utmost indifference on his immovable face—suddenly smile and bow slightly to the narrator of the anecdote. “Sir,” he said, “you have told a very interesting story, and I congratulate you upon your acquaintance with the admirable Mr. Brown. But perhaps you will now permit me also to relate an anecdote which, though less entertaining, is also true, and whose scene is the United States.”

Another “Hear! Hear!” even more eager than the former one, echoed from all sides, and the Englishman began:

“The French captain of cuirassiers, Monsieur Durand, one of my most intimate friends in Paris, was sent to America by

his government during the last war between France and Germany, to buy horses for the army. Late in October in the year 1870 he found himself in a little town in Texas, which was famed only for a roughly built, very spacious circus, where, shortly before, Mexican bull-fighters had given several performances. Monsieur Durand, who had arrived in the afternoon and gone to the only hotel in the place, was sitting in the drawing-room that evening before an open fire which was extremely comfortable, and had beside him a little table holding a bottle of claret and a glass. As he stretched out his limbs, wearied by the long railway journey, and gazed thoughtfully into

the fire, the door opened and a second guest entered the room. This was Mr. Jonathan Oilking, one of the most prominent personages in the place, a man who had the reputation of possessing great wealth and rare urbanity. Oilking, without a word of greeting, or even touching his soft, broad-brimmed felt hat, went straight to the fireside, pushed the chair occupied by the captain a little aside, and, leaning against the mantelpiece with his back to the fire, directly opposite to Durand, stared him directly in the face.

“The Frenchman was strongly tempted to spring at the newcomer’s throat, but thought, ‘custom of the country,’ and con-

tented himself with shrugging his shoulders and gazing at the ceiling instead of the flames. Oilking warmed himself for some time with great satisfaction, and then perceived the wine standing on the little table beside the captain. With the greatest composure he seized the bottle, filled a glass from it, and emptied it at a single gulp, after which he replaced it, smacking his lips. Durand's blood boiled, but he still controlled himself and continued to scan the ceiling and walls with increased attention. Oilking now remained motionless for a time, and only occasional expectorations, which he performed noisily, always aiming at a certain point, which he hit with great

accuracy, proved that life existed in his long, thin body. At last he interrupted the silence by turning to Durand, with the question, 'Stranger, are you the French officer who has come here to buy horses?' The Frenchman pretended not to hear and gazed through the window at the woodland landscape outside. Oilking laid his hand on the captain's shoulder, repeating his question. But the measure was now full to overflowing. Starting up, he roared, in very doubtful English, 'You are a boor, do you understand me?' Jonathan straightened himself and answered gently: 'Stranger, don't repeat that, or I shall throw you out of the window.' 'You must

answer to me for this,' raved Durand, 'you shall give me satisfaction for all the impertinences which you have already committed this evening.' 'If that's all,' observed Oilking, still very calmly, 'you can be accommodated at once. Here is a bowie knife and here is a revolver'—he drew both articles from his belt as he spoke—'if you also have weapons at hand, I'll leave the choice to you whether I shall make a buttonhole in your skin or rip a seam in your body. The room is convenient, there is nothing to prevent our settling the matter at once.' Durand had become somewhat calmer and said to Oilking: 'It is not the custom in my country for people to kill

themselves in closed rooms without witnesses. I will try to find two seconds and send them to you. They will arrange the conditions of the duel with you, and when that is done you will find me at your disposal.' With these words he left the room and went directly to the landlord, to whom he related what had happened and proposed that he should act as a witness and provide another second. The landlord said that witnesses were a superfluous luxury in a duel; but if the captain insisted upon his wish he would willingly serve him; the headwaiter could act as a second witness; he would merely add five dollars to the bill for this extra. Durand, who had already become

somewhat accustomed to American peculiarities, took no offense at this latter remark of the landlord, but requested him to go with the waiter at once to Oil-king and settle the affair with him. Returning to his room, Durand awaited the result of the interview. At the end of an hour the landlord returned, and hastily informed him that the duel could not take place until the morning of the day after tomorrow, the weapon which Oil-king, as the challenged party, had chosen was the revolver; as to the place, he, the landlord, would conduct Mr. Durand to it at the proper time. He had scarcely uttered the last word of his hastily delivered message when

he, too, vanished without awaiting an answer from the captain.

“Durand went quietly to rest and slept well all night. The next day he spent in his room, wrote letters to his relatives and friends in France and directions concerning his wishes in case he should be killed or severely wounded. Toward noon he wanted to speak to the landlord, but the latter could not be found; the captain was told that his second had left town the evening before and would not return until that evening. About twilight he did appear, and with him a number of guests, who filled the hotel from attic to cellar with noisy life. The streets which, hitherto, had been very

quiet, were now full of bustle, and our captain, who did not sleep as well as on the preceding night, could hear the rattle of wheels, the sound of horses' hoofs, and loud voices from the street beneath.

"At last the fateful morning dawned. Durand dressed carefully and awaited what was to come. Toward nine o'clock the landlord and head-waiter entered unceremoniously, asking, 'Are you ready, Captain?' 'Yes.' 'Then come.' Both led the way at a rapid pace, he followed. They took him through the principal street and several side ones to a large open square, in whose center stood the circus building previously mentioned. The second

went to a little door, opened it, and entered a dark, narrow passage, into which Durand followed them with some little hesitation. They evidently noticed his reluctance, for they seized the astonished captain by the arms, hurried him swiftly along for several paces, opened another little door, and ere the captain could prevent it they were standing in the ring of the circus, which was packed from top to bottom with a crowd numbering many hundreds of human beings, who, at the appearance of Durand and his seconds, burst into a thunder of applause and exultant cheers.

“Durand stood as if a thunderbolt had struck him, not

knowing what to make of all this. 'What does this ridiculous farce mean?' he stammered, turning to the landlord; but the latter did not hear, he was motioning with both hands to the spectators to keep silence and, when the tumult had partly subsided, he shouted with all the strength of his lungs: 'Gentlemen, I have the honor to introduce the brave and famous French captain of cuirassiers, Monsieur Durand, the sole survivor of the glorious cuirassier charge at Reichshoffen. He will have the honor of exchanging shots in your presence with an esteemed citizen of this town, Mr. Jonathan Oilking.' Again the audience began to applaud and cheer and, at the same

moment, a little door opposite to the one through which Durand had entered, opened, and in came Jonathan in a fantastic Indian costume, accompanied by two friends.

“Durand now guessed what was in store. Half stifled with rage and excitement, he dealt the landlord, who was standing by his side, a violent blow in the breast and darted with the speed of lightning to the little door, through which, an instant after, he vanished.

“You can guess, gentlemen, what had happened. The appearance of the landlord whom Durand sent to him gave Oilking a brilliant idea. He agreed with him to make the duel a business

matter. That very evening they sent several workmen to the circus, who, by torchlight, repaired the somewhat dilapidated building and mended the rows of seats. They themselves went at once to the neighboring town, called Rome or Paris, I don't remember which, ordered placards to be printed, in which the public was offered on the following day, for a payment of two dollars, the spectacle of a public duel 'with the brave and famous Captain Durand, of Paris, the sole survivor of the charge of the cuirassiers at Reichshoffen,' inserted advertisements in the two local papers, induced one to publish a leading article upon the battle of Reichshoffen, the other an account of the heroic

deeds of Captain Durand in this battle, personally diffused the expectation that Durand would appear in the uniform worn on the day of Reichshoffen, and by all these expedients achieved so great a success that in the evening a special train left Rome—or Paris—to convey the curious spectators, and the next morning, an hour before the time appointed on the placards, every seat in the circus was sold at two dollars.

“Durand made his way out of the place as speedily as possible, and after this adventure gave up his plan of buying horses in Texas. As for Oilking and the landlord, they had some very unpleasant minutes to experience after Durand’s departure from the

ring. Part of the audience laughed, others grumbled, some demanded the return of their money, others wanted to have a duel at any rate, and said that they would be satisfied with one between the landlord and Oil-king; in short, there was a great uproar, and I have been told that the special correspondents who had hastened here from the neighboring cities did not return without having to report the exchange of several bullets and blows."

The Englishman paused. At the same moment the train stopped and the guard shouted loudly: "Brussels!" The Americans, who had listened to the speaker with great amusement, left the carriage,

but not without first shaking hands with the Englishman, exclaiming merrily: "Well parried, Cousin Britisher!"

WIFE VERSUS NATIVE LAND.

A STORY FOR SMOKERS.

The L. drawing-room is not large, but it is uncommonly pleasant. The tastefully furnished apartment, heated by a tall white porcelain stove, is very comfortable. A pretty hanging lamp of antique form diffuses a subdued light, which is far more adapted to promote innocent chat than a strong, brilliant illumination.

Eight or ten of us formed a merry party in this drawing-room,

as we leaned comfortably back in the velvet armchairs, while tea, in Chinese cups, sent forth its fragrance before us. The round table consisted principally of ladies, and the time was just after the first fashionable balls, yet our conversation did not turn upon the carnival and its pleasures. It is almost incredible that a tea party in the carnival season could occupy itself with so abstract a question, but we were actually discussing which would probably be the stronger, love or patriotism? Since there was not a single blue-stockings in the group, it is still perfectly incomprehensible how we could have reached this serious subject; but the fact is that, without perceiving how the

topic came on the carpet, we suddenly found ourselves in the midst of the most animated interchange of thought.

Opinions were greatly divided. Some ascribed larger powers and more mighty influence over the human mind to patriotism, others to love.

"Oh," murmured a slender girl with fair hair and pale blue eyes, the happy bride of a fortnight, "I am firmly convinced that love is a stronger feeling than patriotism, nay, that no other can equal it in might. How many more human beings love has inspired to heroic deeds, nay, to self-sacrifice, than patriotism!" While thus declaiming in a sentimental tone, she cast at her husband, who

was sitting by her side, a tender, languishing glance, which was probably intended to be an eloquent commentary on her words.

The enviable bridegroom did not entirely agree with the being of his choice, but thought that in youth love, in mature years, on the contrary, patriotism would exert the greater power.

"As for me," quoth the doctor, a somewhat pedantic man, who, even at tea parties, can neither think nor speak except according to Aristotelian categories, "I think that here national and race characteristics have the strongest influence. The cold Northerner can be roused to more intense enthusiasm by the abstract idea of the native land

than the hot-blooded Southron, who would be fired more speedily by a creature of flesh and blood. The German stock of the Swiss Alemanni could produce a Winkelried, but the Indian who, for love of the invalid daughter of the Spanish governor, betrayed the secret of the chincona tree, known only to the native, and thereby broke the power of the fever, which was on the point of ridding America of the foreign oppressor, was a Southerner, and more accessible to the suggestions of love than to those of patriotism. A Swede or an Englishman may be able to sacrifice more for his native land than for the woman whom he loves, but I doubt if this is

true of a Spaniard or an Italian."

The most noticeable woman in our circle was Frau von G. She was a somewhat stout but remarkably well-preserved person, whose forty years would scarcely be noticed even by an eye which did not look through the glasses of gallantry. Shining black hair framed a face of noble mould; sparkling black eyes, a classically moulded nose, a delicately curved upper lip, slightly shaded by an almost imperceptible velvety down, and a full, firm, round chin, combined with a delicate brunette complexion to produce a countenance whose Southern type was unmistakable. Had not her appearance and manner betrayed it.

her accent would have revealed that she was a foreigner.

Frau von G. had listened silently and attentively, but the doctor's last remark called a smile to her lips, and induced her to mingle in the conversation.

"I cannot fully assent to what you have just said of the Spaniards and Italians, Doctor," she remarked. "If you will allow me, I'll relate a little episode from my own life which will prove that, under certain circumstances, patriotism can influence even an Italian more powerfully than love."

The interest with which every face turned toward the fair speaker contained the most flattering invitation to tell her story.

“ You know that I am a native of Milan, and did not leave my birthplace until ten years ago, when my husband’s business summoned him here. I was a girl of eighteen when the insurrection in Lombardy was quelled. Marshal Radetzky entered Milan at the head of a victorious army, the ‘ sword of Italy ’ was broken, and every patriot, with bleeding heart, was forced to renounce the hopes which he had seen on the verge of realization. Oh, you who have not experienced those days can have no idea of their sorrow and discouragement. The state of siege, to which city and country were condemned, exerted a disturbing influence upon every detail of our daily lives. We

avoided the Scala, for there we beheld the hateful spectacle of two soldiers, standing with their guns in the proscenium at the right and left of the stage, and constantly reminding us of the humiliation and misfortune of our native land; we omitted our usual walks on the Corso, for there we were continually insulted by Austrian officers. Every family was restricted to its own circle. We lived within our own four walls, and you can scarcely imagine how much weariness and melancholy this means to us Italians.

“During this terrible period I made the acquaintance of Albert v. G., who afterwards became my husband. He was my brother's classmate at college, and after-

ward, like him, became an engineer. Albert was handsome and agreeable, and his visits were doubly welcome in that dull, wearisome time. That I was not indifferent to him, I soon discovered. At first he came with my brother, and left the house with him. Later he came alone, but soon went away if he was not at home. Finally, he became our daily guest, and as my parents, too, did not object to his visits, he remained longer and longer with me, and at last entertained me for hours with his clever, pleasant chat.

“We were very well acquainted and already on familiar terms, when one day—he had been sitting all the morning reading aloud

to me—he suddenly asked permission to light a cigar.

“‘What,’ I exclaimed, almost terrified, ‘are you a smoker, Albert?’

“You must know that at that time I had a great aversion to men who smoked. I could not praise my brother enough for not having acquired the unpleasant habit, and declared a hundred times that I would rather endure anything than to kiss a man who sullied his lips with the disagreeable weed.

“Until then I had not known that Albert was a smoker, for, of course, there was no smoking in my drawing-room, and I had no opportunity to discover his vice elsewhere.

"The vehemence of my question confused him.

" 'Yes, I smoke,' he answered hesitatingly, 'but what is there extraordinary about that?'

" 'True,' I cried, 'unfortunately there is nothing extraordinary about it, but I will tell you this that I will never marry a man who takes a cigar into his mouth. I cannot endure such a person, he is utterly detestable in my eyes.'

"Albert looked at me in surprise, but said nothing and merely slipped the cigar he had already taken out back into his pocket. Then he remained with me a short time in a depressed, silent mood, and soon took his leave.

"The next day he came again and tried to assume a cheerful,

unembarrassed manner. Without any introduction he seized the first opportunity to turn the conversation upon smoking, and said jestingly that yesterday he had been fairly frightened out of his wits, probably I did not mean what I said so seriously, he hoped I should become accustomed to his habit, etc. But I understood no jesting on this subject, and again, with the utmost earnestness, protested that I could not endure a man who smoked and never would accustom myself to the habit. On the contrary, I expected that a man who loved me would make the sacrifice of renouncing the unpleasant vice.

“My avowal threw Albert into

a state of melancholy, which would now seem to me very comical, but then grieved me to the heart. He was very sorrowful, and left me with the air of a most miserable man. From that time his cheerfulness deserted him, he sighed constantly in the most heartrending manner, and his eyes always had a sorrowful expression. This mood lasted about a week and caused me much suffering, but I could not and would not change it; Albert must give up smoking, or we would separate.

“One day my brother came to me, and took me to task for my folly. Albert was stealing about like a shadow, and no longer dared to visit me; I ought not

to torment him any longer with my foolish obstinacy, but, in Heaven's name, let him have his cigar; he had already made the attempt to give up smoking, but the habit was stronger than his will, and he would really fall sick from it. Here I could no longer refrain from interrupting him bitterly: 'So I am to have a husband who is not strong enough to give up a ridiculous habit? If he loves me he must do it for my sake; now I really insist upon it, for I shall see in it a test of his love.'

"My brother scolded and raged, but all was useless, and I clung to my resolve. I should weary you if I were to tell you all the details of this quarrel, whose mem-

ory has a peculiar charm for me. Suffice it to say that at last Albert came to me, and, with tears in his eyes, begged me not to be cruel any longer, and, as usually happens, I wept, too, and said: 'Very well, I will show you that my love is stronger than yours. You would not give up your habit for my sake, I will try, for yours, to conquer my repugnance.'

"Shortly after we were married Alfred smoked as before. In spite of his cigars I felt very, very happy with him, and had entirely forgotten the sorrowful weeks of sulking, when I was reminded of it in a very peculiar way.

"We had been wedded about six months when I noticed, one evening, that Albert did not light a

cigar after supper, as usual. I secretly wondered, but thought it mere accident. The next day there was the same abstinence, which I remarked, and which engaged my attention completely. When, on the third evening, it was repeated, I was extremely curious and much excited. 'What,' I thought, 'is Albert voluntarily making the sacrifice for the wife which he would not yield to the entreaties of the betrothed bride?' My heart exulted over this proof of love, and I considered myself—don't laugh—the happiest of mortals. I set about a careful inspection and made the most delightful discoveries. The cigar box on Albert's desk was empty ; his beautiful amber mouthpiece, which he usually

had with him, lay on some papers as a paper-weight—there was no doubt of it, Albert had given up smoking.

“I could no longer help expressing my joy. ‘Albert,’ I said one evening, ‘you are an angel, you not only relinquish smoking for my sake, but you are too delicate to say a single word about it, or to betray, by the slightest sign, what a painful effort it costs you.’ While speaking, I embraced and kissed him with genuine enthusiasm.

“But, to my great astonishment, this outburst of tenderness embarrassed him. He escaped from my arms and lowered his eyes before my questioning gaze. After a sorrowful pause, he said

at last, in a hesitating, uncertain voice: 'My sweet, little wife, I might play the part of being generous and self-sacrificing, but I think it is more manly to confess the truth. So learn that I have not given up my cigar for your sake, but—for that of my native land! You know that the *tobacco monopoly* has been introduced by the Austrian government; we have now agreed that every patriot will give up smoking, in order, so far as lies in his power, to lessen the receipts of the treasury. This may seem to you trivial, but we must deal the foe needle-pricks, if we cannot attack him with the sword.'

"To tell you the truth, I sulked for several days; but at last I

considered the matter, and resolved to show that an Italian woman can be no less patriotic than an Italian man. I forgave my husband, and even praised him for his resolution, which I could not help thinking heroic. 'The idea that you love anything better than you do me,' I said to him, 'becomes endurable only by remembering that this something is—our native land.'

"So you see," added Frau von G., as she concluded her story, turning to the doctor with a smile, "that, even in an Italian, patriotism is more powerful than love, and the hot-blooded Italian sacrificed to the abstract idea of his native land the cigar which he had not been willing to give up

for the sake of a creature of flesh
and blood."



MEMORIES OF HUNGARY.

I.

ALI HADJI EFFENDI.

The inhabitants of Pesth are very ungrateful people. Venice bestowed a thousand ducats upon a poet who glorified the splendor of the city of the Doges in two mediocre distiches; Rome gladdened her historian, Gregorovius, with the offer of publishing his work at her own expense; even Belgrade knew how to honor Laboulaye, because he

had written a few friendly essays about the metropolis of Servia; the people of Pesth alone did nothing for a writer who had striven unweariedly to bring the beauties of the Hungarian capital near the distant East in the most musical Persian ghasels and quatrains. He lived in their midst, the enthusiastic bard of their renown, but no one troubled himself about poor Ali Hadji Effendi, and the only attention which the authorities showed him consisted in having him occasionally locked up by the policemen for unauthorized peddling.

Worthy Ali Hadji Effendi was not blessed with worldly goods; for reasons which Schiller has explained in his "Division of

the Earth," he had not succeeded in obtaining a place in the temple service of the golden calf, and since, in consequence of the defective school system of Hungary, the Persian language is still far too little diffused among the people of Pesth for him to hope to be able to maintain himself respectably by the sale of his poems, he had determined to carry on a little retail business, whose flourishing development was often checked by an act of official rigor.

He was an interesting figure, this slender, black - bearded, dreamy-eyed, sunburnt Oriental, who, years ago, established his perambulating wares, sometimes on one street corner of Pesth,

sometimes on another, and with quiet satisfaction awaited purchasers behind them. A dense throng of school children, maid-servants, and apprentices constantly surrounded him, eyeing with great interest the treasures he displayed. Real glass diamonds glittered in polished brass rings, Turkish and Christian rosaries of amber and coral lay side by side in a tolerance worthy of imitation, small knives, toothpicks, and needle-books completed the stock of wares, with the exception of one evidently unpurchasable show-piece, an exquisitely wrought halberd—which he had to show. Customers were allowed to rummage among the articles at will, and only when

some boy, with insolvency written upon his—nose, created too much disorder, did Ali raise his voice, ordering him, in deep, guttural tones, to desist from his mischief. He could support his Persian words with such expressive gestures of the hands that even the most ignorant cobbler's apprentice instantly understood them.

How had Ali Hadji Effendi come to Pesth? The question is not difficult to answer. In the Mohammedan world there is an order of dervishes whose members have all taken upon themselves the vow of a life of constant wandering. The adherents of this order are called Hadjis. The Hadji has no home, or rather his home is the great world of Islam.

And Islam never gives up a province which it has once possessed. So, as kings bear the title of provinces which their forefathers lost centuries ago, Islam regards as its own countries where, for a long time, no mosque has raised its slender minaret and airy dome toward the sky. As the seas of former geological periods have everywhere left their shell fish, which are now found on lofty mountain peaks in the midst of continents, the Turkish flood which submerged Europe a century and a half ago has also, after subsiding, everywhere left a trace, the grave of a Mohammedan saint. Ofen cherishes the resting-place of such a saint; Gül Baba, the Father of

Roses, sleeps his eternal sleep there, and an ancient, half-ruined mosque, which rises above his grave, is the last monument in this neighborhood of the former greatness and power of the Turkish Empire. From the frontiers of China, from India to the Ofner Mountains, stretches an unbroken chain of the graves of saints, and many formerly in Mohammedan soil are now surrounded by unbelievers. But an army of Hadjis is constantly in motion, passing from one saint's grave to another, and there is no resting-place of a pious Moslem so remote, or so hidden, that some Hadjis do not annually visit it, to throw themselves upon their faces, murmur proverbs from the

Koran, humbly praise the goodness and wisdom of Allah, and then continue their aimless pilgrimage. The Orientals have the devout belief that the dead whose graves are now in the land of the infidels would throw themselves over the bridge of hell, in sheer anguish, if they should learn that the crescent had been driven from these regions. Therefore, from time to time, Moslems must visit these graves, in order to maintain their belief that everything remained as it was during their lives, and that the crescent still shone with undimmed radiance.

The Hadjis do not beg; in the sunny lands of the East, where the sky and the earth pro-

vide for the poor as loving parents care for their infant children, where the shade of the roof above a well, or of a mosque, affords hospitable shelter, and the fig tree by the wayside sweet food, they can spend the whole day in pious, contemplative idleness, but when they enter the inhospitable country of the Giaours, where the sky is as harsh as the manners of the people, and the prison is the only place which affords shelter gratis, they carry on a trade in all sorts of trifles, and thus obtain the means to satisfy their few needs.

Ali Hadji Effendi was one of these wandering dervishes; he had seen many lands and peoples; had washed the dust of the roads

from his feet in the rivers of three-quarters of the globe; he had listened to the dashing of the Ganges, the Euphrates, the Nile, and the Danube, and was versed in the languages of all the nations that dwell in the wide region between the Himalaya and the Caucasus. In his Persian home he had been renowned as a poet, and the street singers still chant his love songs in the squares of Bagdad. One spring, in his journeying, he came to Pesth, where he instantly sought out several well-known Orientalists—Vámbéry, Goldziher, and others—and asked them to write in Persian characters the Hungarian words which would be indispensable for daily use, for in-

stance, reckoning, the names of coins, of his goods, etc.

It would scarcely be believed that the Persian dervish knew the Pesth Orientalists, yet it was so. Somewhere in Roumelia, at the foot of the Balkans, or still farther away in Anatolia, a Hadji journeying westward meets such men on their way to the East. They sit silently side by side on the divan or the rush-mat, their fingers play with the beads of the rosary, and their lips softly murmur passages from the Koran. Suddenly one raises his voice and says: "Brother! You are going toward the West, to the land of the unbelievers. If you reach the city of the Magyars, Pesth, go to the great palace on the bank of

the Danube. It is called the Academy. Mention the names of Vámbéry and Goldziher Effendi, and you will be taken to men who fear God and are kind to strangers." The other answers: "Brother, you are directing your steps eastward and will reach Benares. Walk through the bazaar there, and where you see the shop of a dealer in weapons, between two silk merchants, enter and greet him; you will be well treated." So the Hadjis bear the fame of hospitable men to distant quarters of the world, and wherever they meet one another they exchange addresses.

Ali Hadji Effendi was soon at home in Pesth. What great trouble was necessary for the pur-

pose? His patrons obtained from the authorities permission for him to remain, and he could pursue his business. Every morning he came from his night quarters with his wares, and wandered through the streets. Wherever he found shade and a clean spot he unfolded his rug, sat down with crossed legs, arranged his goods, and, with Oriental patience, awaited customers. Nothing could disturb his equanimity. If the children teased him, he smilingly shook his finger at them. To a boy who once thrust a pin through his turban from behind, he addressed a very edifying and moral lecture in the Persian language, summing up the instruction at the close in the two words "Nem szip" (not

right), which he uttered with a grave shake of the head. He could not be roused to anger; it was impossible to irritate him.

If a soldier came, who wanted to give his sweetheart, usually one of the Slavonic race, a surprise, and wished to buy a brass ring with glass, or even a silver one, set with turquoise, Ali waited quietly till he had selected something, and then named the price, about twenty-three kreuzers. The purchaser, usually in a shout, as if the Persian could understand German better if spoken in a loud than in a low tone, made his offer, but Ali did not say another word and would not have accepted twenty-two kreuzers and a half for the ring. Not until the sum

which he had named was paid in full did he deliver the article and receive the money, which, without counting, he thrust into his belt. He never allowed any haggling, this was a principle of his business, and it may readily be supposed that, under such circumstances, his receipts were not large from customers who mainly belonged to the servant class.

If he thought he had made enough, or if the time seemed long, he spread an old piece of sack cloth over his wares and lay down on his carpet to sleep. He had no fear of thieves, and the kindness and honesty of the public had never disappointed him. Often, too, the poetic inspiration seized him, and then he drew

from his girdle a small yellow book and wrote Persian verses in it. If, at such a time, customers attempted to interrupt him, he waved them off with a gesture of the hand, and remained for hours utterly oblivious of his surroundings. When the poem was finally finished, he beckoned to the bystanders until they formed a dense circle around him, and declaimed his verse in a half song. His ears feasted on the melody of his own creation. In the zeal of reading aloud he rose, his eyes flashed, his voice trembled, he explained single verses, described to his listeners the beauty of an image, the wit of a turn of speech, and when he had finished and his glance wandered over the spectators, who

were staring at him in astonishment, he smilingly protested, "Szip, szip!" (Fine, fine!), pointing to the little book with his finger.

On the very first day of his sojourn in Pesth he composed a ghasel of four lines, a literal translation of which would run as follows :

"O city on the Danube, home of men with
open hand,
Thy loins the river girdles like unto a silver
band,
Thy head the mountains, diadem of emerald
green, doth grace,
Alas, that the crescent from thee must now
avert its face."

One day a hard-hearted policeman arrested him and drove him to the town-hall. There he cleared himself and was released

in a few hours. He avenged himself on the rude fellow with the following sarcastic ghasel:

“As the laden camel through the streets of
Samarcand men drive,
So here, mistaking a command, to urge me
on they strive.
The armed policeman, swearing, doth press
me toward the gaol,
Yet he, too, is also driven: for folly drives
his soul.”

Daily he composed a song in praise of the city of Pesth and of Hungary. He described the beauty of the Ofner Mountains, the majesty of the giant river, the splendor of the palatial buildings, the proud men, the fair women; and when he had a series of ghasels he went to his patrons and read them aloud to them. Often, too, he carried his

goods home at midday and paid a visit to Vámbéry or Goldziher. Removing his slippers outside the door, he silently entered the room, mutely greeted the occupant by touching his brow, lips, and breast with his hand, then went to the book-case, took from the place he knew so well the heroic verse of Firdusi, the divine poems of Hâfiz, or the mocking ones of Omar Khayyám, sat down on the floor with crossed legs, read the Persian writers for an hour, then closed the volume, restored it to its place and, with another silent greeting, went away.

Thus one whole summer passed, autumn came, the leaves began to fall from the trees, and the swal-

lows were preparing to depart. Our Hadji Ali Effendi soon felt too cold in his blue calico caftan, and one day he was no longer seen in the streets of Pesth.

He had drawn his girdle closer, wound his turban anew, taken in his hand the knotted staff which had been his companion from Küenlün to the Blocksberg, and set forth again on his pilgrimage. Outside the city he had paused, raised his hand to his brow, his lips, and his breast, and then silently continued his way eastward without another backward glance.

But perhaps, years later, some beautiful almeh will sing in the bazaar of Bassora, to the music of the mandolin, the song which the traveling dervish composed in

praise of the hospitable city in the distant West, and the visitors to the market, seated in a circle around, will nod their heads approvingly to the rhythm of the verse :

“O city on the Danube, home of men with
open hand,
Thy loins the river girdles like unto a silver
band,
Thy head the mountains, diadem of emerald
green, doth grace,
Alas, that the crescent from thee must now
avert its face.”

MEMORIES OF HUNGARY.

II.

THE CROSS AT THE CORNER.

For years my way led me, several times a day, through Tabakgasse in Pesth, and I was therefore obliged to pass a crucifix erected at the corner where Kreuzgasse opens into Tabakgasse. It was a weather-beaten, insignificant affair, such as is rarely seen in the cities, but more frequently met with on country roads and in poor villages, and

was evidently as old as the quarter of the city in whose midst it stood; Kreuzgasse undoubtedly took its name from it. A century and a half before, when the "inner city" became too small for the population, and a few bold colonists built the first houses outside the wall upon the loose sand of the Rákos, the founders of the Theresienstadt erected at the same time this crucifix, probably to place the new quarter of the city under the special protection of the Crucified One.

The artless piety of these people required no external stimulation by works of art. Their religious feeling did not demand a beautiful and monumental form

for the object of their reverence, and was sufficiently intense to be satisfied even with a badly-colored image, a shapeless wooden cross. The crucifix just mentioned was a proof of that touching power of faith, which understands how to transfigure even the rude and ugly with the nimbus of reverence. It is difficult to imagine a less beautiful and imposing structure than this crucifix. Two rough beams, fastened into the form of a cross, on which was nailed a piece of iron shaped into the outlines of a human figure, that was all. The hand of some Beotian, doubtless very devout, but totally ignorant of the beauty of oak blackened by age, had smeared the cross with a coat of the

most hideous shade of brick-red, and painted on the iron, with much goodwill, but very little art, the image of the Saviour.

A hundred and fifty years do not pass over so primitive a work of art without some trace. In many spots on the iron, now half corroded with rust, the color had come off entirely; the Redeemer's image lacked an eye, only a small portion of the crown of thorns remained, the legs showed especially comprehensive damages, the face and breast were covered with rust stains, which looked like dried drops of blood and produced effects which the "artist" certainly had not intended. Even the wood had not been left untouched by the tooth of time;

countless cracks and crevices intersected the entire length of the beams; one could not expect them to continue to oppose the invincible tenacity and defiance of the oak to the attacks of the drenching autumn rains, the parching heat of summer, and the fierce blasts of the tempest. When, at a late hour of the silent night, I walked through the empty street and passed the cross, I heard distinctly the monotonous tapping of the wood-beetle, whose jaws vied with decay and disintegration to accomplish the destruction of the crucifix.

This description has probably convinced everyone that the cross in itself was neither remarkable nor valuable; yet the sight of it

always made me thoughtful, nay filled me with a certain emotion. Poor, iron Saviour! There he stood, deserted by God and man. No one prayed to Him, no one offered vows, He was in everyone's way. The generation that placed Him here, the other generations, whose hearts He had filled with devotion, had died long ago; in this age and environment He was alien and desolate. Most people passed the crucifix without vouchsafing it a single glance. True, in rainy weather it attracted a certain degree of attention, but this was wholly profane. As it stood exactly in the center of the narrow sidewalk, no one carrying an open umbrella could pass between it and the

wall, so there was only the choice of shutting the umbrella and walking several paces under the streaming eaves, or keeping it open and leaving the sidewalk, that is, wading several paces through mire a foot deep. Both equally aroused the wrath of pedestrians against the obstacle in their path, and they complained that the magistrates allowed such hindrances to traffic.

A crucifix degraded to be a hindrance to traffic! Could it fail to lose its sanctity in the eyes of the populace? No one raised his hat, no one made the sign of the cross in passing. Only plain peasants still knelt devoutly before it, and the birds used it as a welcome resting-

place. The swallow, seeking food for her nestlings, wearied by the busy exercise of her maternal duties, perched for a moment's rest on the Saviour's outstretched arm and, at the foot of the crucifix, an old beggar woman frequently crouched, letting the worn, distorted features of the Crucified One plead for sympathy and alms for herself.

At a certain time a momentous change suddenly occurred. Workmen began to demolish the corner-house, whose faithful Eck-art the crucifix had been for a century. And in fact it was not too soon. The low structure, built of unbaked bricks, which looked as if it had sunk to its knees in the earth, its windowless

wall facing the street, its mouldering, moss-grown shingle roof, and horribly dirty courtyard, no longer suited the modern city with its fashionable boulevards. As at that time I expected to be obliged to pass through this street for a considerable time longer, I followed every change for the better in its physiognomy with very natural interest. I watched with satisfaction the rise of lofty scaffoldings, which indicated the erection of a new building several stories high, the piles of brick, heaps of sand and building stones, and the throngs of masons and hod-carriers. Only when, one morning, I again passed by and noticed the rapid progress of the demo-

lition, I suddenly observed that the crucifix was missing. It had been there the evening before, now it had vanished. It had been torn from the ground in the night, a rude hand had hacked the wood and broken the iron, the cross at the corner no longer existed.

I will not deny that its disappearance grieved me. I was so accustomed to see it several times a day as I hurried by. A beggar at the corner, a swallow's nest under the cornice, a flower seller in front of the door, may gain importance in a man's habits of life; why not also a crucifix at the crossing of two streets? The thought that I should never again see that shab-

by old iron image, the rude red cross, filled me with regret. I involuntarily asked myself whether anybody in the world would miss the poor old crucifix. Hardly. And yet, forgotten and forsaken as it was, it must still have had one faithful friend. Traces of a care-taking hand were often visible on the cross; many signs showed that now and then some one still remembered it. The thick layers of dust and dirt which usually darkened the Saviour's painted face were often carefully washed off, though the wind soon renewed them; on many feast days a modest wreath, a little bunch of flowers, adorned the cross, and on the great festivals of the Catholic Church an

ancient lantern, behind whose red panes glimmered a dim little light, hung before it.

While still thinking of the unknown person who had addressed me through the attentions lavished upon the ancient crucifix, a new figure that appeared on the scene aroused my interest. An old woman, shabbily but neatly dressed, came up the street and suddenly stopped, as if rooted to the earth, when she noticed the absence of the cross. With an emotion which she was unable to subdue, she clasped her hands and gazed fixedly at the hole in the ground where, for a century and a half, the cross had been set. Several minutes passed ere she recovered herself and hastily ap-

proached a man who was giving the workmen directions—he was evidently the overseer of the building operations.

“Sir,” she said in a trembling voice, “the cross has been taken away. Could you tell me what has been done with it?”

The person addressed stared at her a moment, then, with a rude laugh, answered: “What has been done with the cross? Why, what should be done with it? Somebody used it to cook his supper!”

With these words he turned from the old woman and continued his orders to the workmen.

I approached the aged dame and asked sympathizingly why she had inquired about the fate of the cross? At first she did not

reply, then, after a short pause, she said in an agitated tone :

“If I should tell you, perhaps you would laugh, like yonder fellow.”

I assured her of the contrary, and my expression probably confirmed the truth of my words, for she allowed herself to be persuaded to open her heart to me.

“You see,” she began, “I am an old woman—seventy-five years—and I have no relatives left in the world. All my kindred, all the friends of my youth are dead, and this old cross was the sole object which reminded me of the happy days of my childhood. What do I say—object? It was a friend, a living being that could speak to me. I was born

in the house which they are tearing down. I played at the foot of the crucifix when I was a little child. Later, when I grew older and began to go to school, my mother told me to kiss the cross whenever I passed it, because then God would help me and I should repeat my lessons well at school.

“In those days the cross was not so old and unsightly as it became afterward. The image of the Christ was kept freshly painted, and had a beautiful gilt halo around its head. And the people showed great reverence for it. You know,” she added, glancing with a peculiar expression upward to the steeples of the neighboring synagogue, “at

that time this neighborhood was almost exclusively Catholic, and not one of these men would have passed without at least lifting his hat and crossing himself. The crucifix was always adorned with flowers, images of the saints, and wreaths, and the master of the house kept a light burning before it. Corpus Christi Day was the most beautiful holiday in the year to the girls in the house. Then the procession passed, and we adorned the cross with flowers, leaves and ribbons. It was our task, and we performed it so gladly.

“Don’t laugh at me, but from my earliest childhood I regarded •‘our’ crucifix as my friend and patron. If, when a little girl, I

wished for anything, I slipped out of the door, late at night, when there was no one in the street, went to the cross, clasped my arms around it, and said softly : 'Dear Jesus, I pray Thee, give me this or that!' If I received it, I went out again and thanked the crucifix for it.

"I grew up and people said that I was a pretty girl. Then I made the acquaintance of a young student, who visited me two years—and afterward married me," she added hastily. "He always spent the evening with me, and, when he went away, I accompanied him first to the gate, where we lingered a while, and then to the corner, where we paused again. If he wanted to kiss me when we

parted I would not permit it—the presence of the crucifix shamed me.”

“But not always!” I interrupted, smiling.

The old dame pretended not to hear my remark and hurriedly continued: “My lover obtained an appointment in the city and married me. On my wedding day my girl friends adorned the crucifix as beautifully as if the Corpus Christi procession was to pass. A year later a son was born, a beautiful child, fair, blue-eyed and chubby; when I went out, carrying him in my arms, people stopped, took him from me, and never wearied of kissing him. He grew finely and learned to walk and to talk,

then he suddenly fell sick and the doctors said he would die.

“One night”—the old woman’s eyes filled with tears at the memory—“I was watching beside his little bed. The physician had told me that he would scarcely live until the next morning. I thought my heart would break, and I should go mad. Toward midnight the child grew quieter and fell asleep. An irresistible yearning, to which I could not help yielding, seized upon me. I lived near; opening the door, I rushed hither through the darkness and did as I had always done. Weeping, I embraced the cross and prayed: ‘Dear Jesus, I beseech Thee, save my child!’ I returned home greatly relieved—

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the child was still asleep, it slept until the morning, grew better, and in a fortnight was well.

“I have already detained you a long time with my talk—to be brief, I was destined to survive my parents, my husband, my only son, all my relatives and friends; the single remaining friend of my childhood was the cross at the corner, and now that, too, is gone——”

I understood the old woman's feelings, and, deeply moved, bowed and silently left her.

MEMORIES OF HUNGARY.

III.

THE ALTAR PAINTING,

Who among my readers has ever heard the name of Péteri? Very few, certainly, and it is no wonder, for one may be a good geographer without knowing that Péteri is a pleasant little village, four miles from Pesth, secluded from all intercourse with the world, in the midst of a charming plain, still untrodden by the iron steed which imposes upon

you

the earth, wherever he directs his victorious course, fetters which are very willingly endured.

This quiet hamlet was the goal of an excursion, which I took with a small party the first of October in the year 1867.

We had started early and were rolling over the boundless Rákos plain. The landscape presented a marvelously beautiful aspect. In the background rose the Ofner Mountains, covered with a gray hood of mist; here and there a single peak was illumined by the rising sun, displaying a peculiar blending of shades of purple and violet, which produced the most magnificent effect. The course of the Danube was marked by a broad mass of vapor, hovering

over the stream, as if the spirits of the ancient Ister, shrouded in clouds, were floating above their watery domain. Before us the sun was just rising, revealing the historic plain of Rákos, with its undulating sand-hills, meadows, and stubble fields, sparsely scattered with solitary, straw-thatched houses, a few groups of trees, and clattering mills. On both sides of the dusty high road cows were grazing, which stared at us with scarcely less curiosity than the little barefooted boy who tramped after them. The tinkling of the cow-bells blended musically with the notes of the matin-bells, borne in low, subdued tones by the keen morning air.

Our horses moved so swiftly

that the tall clumps of straw, and the still taller poles of the wells in the pastures flitted past us like ghosts, and after a drive of barely an hour we reached Keresstur, where we breakfasted in a tavern which, considering its proximity to the capital, was incredibly primitive. The hamlet has no remarkable sights except an old castle where the Emperor Joseph II. once spent the night, and a little tavern-keeper with an enormous beard. After a short rest we set out on our journey again. If the road had formerly been uncomfortable, it now began to be actually bad. The surrounding country still retained the monotonous character of a plain, but the road supplied a tolerable

alternation of mountain and valley; cliffs and lakes, owing to the limited space, were represented by huge stones and deep puddles, between which obstacles the driver zig-zagged with marvelous skill. It was about nine o'clock when we saw, in the distance, the little houses and slender, beautiful church-spire of Péteri.

Péteri, the goal of our excursion, is a very small village, inhabited by Slovaks, which consists of two parallel streets and a few dozen insignificant peasant houses, all built with the gable in front. A stranger must be a very rare spectacle in its streets, for great was the excitement which we awakened among the inhabitants. Accompanied by the barking of

dogs and the cries of children, we drove slowly on between the straw-thatched huts, and stopped before the house of the Protestant pastor, whom we found engaged in the patriarchal occupation of whipping a large, shaggy black dog, which had been accused by his wife of the crime of killing chickens.

When the man of God saw us, he let the dog go, and, casting an embarrassed glance at his coat, which bore numerous traces of rural labor, he conducted us into his room, which was destitute of a floor. After exchanging a few civil speeches, we told him that we had come to see the village church, which, we had heard, was the handsomest in the neigh-

borhood. The pastor looked astonished, but at once expressed his readiness to open the sacred edifice, if we were really interested in it. Clanking several huge keys, he led the way and we followed. A large open square, with a fountain in the center, surrounded by several majestic oaks, occupied the space in front of it. Several steps led to the entrance of this house of God, which, judging from the exterior, was tolerably plain. The upper one afforded a view of the entire length of the two streets of which Péteri consists.

The doors creaked on their hinges. We entered, walked directly to the communion table, which was totally devoid of orna-

ment, and at the first glance we were irresistibly attracted by a picture hung above the pulpit between two pillars. The brilliant coloring of the painting contrasted strangely with the bare, austere appearance of the spacious interior, which threw it into still stronger relief.

The picture represented the Sermon on the Mount. Christ, attired in flowing robes, with an ample mantle draped over them, stands upon a boulder, his indescribably beautiful face illumined by divine enthusiasm, his radiant eyes most expressively proclaim to us the words of love and divine wisdom which are flowing from his half-parted lips. Around him, extending to the distant back-

ground, we see a throng of people in picturesque groups, evidently hanging on the Saviour's lips; but only a few figures, immediately surrounding the rock, are executed in detail. Behind the divine preacher we behold an ascetic, clad in a garment of skins, his brows contracted in a gloomy frown, and his bearded chin propped on his hand, evidently pondering over the words he has heard. Beside him stands a youth, with his arms folded across his breast, uplifting his clear brow and dark eyes to Christ with fervent devotion, unheeding the words of a third figure, a doubter, who stands by his side, and, with the mocking expression of a Mephistopheles, appears to be whispering something

into his ear, while his hand secretly points to the Saviour. In the foreground two female figures rivet our attention ; one, a large, voluptuous woman, is lying at the feet of the divine preacher, her face, drenched with tears, expresses infinite suffering and the deepest contrition ; the other, a most wonderful contrast, possessing supernatural beauty, as with divine calmness she raises her beaming eyes and, with clasped hands, her whole figure breathing angelic innocence, listens to the sermon of the Son of God. The picture is completed by two lovely naked children, who, with their little round faces turned toward the spectator, are carelessly playing with a shell which they have

found. It is the most magnificent and yet the most charming scene imaginable. The divine, glorified form of the inspired preacher; the gloomy ascetic, examining ere he believes; the devout youth, who hears revelations in every word; the doubter, who has come to listen and to scoff; the sinful woman, whose heart is shaken and crushed to its depths by every word of mercy and heavenly love; the chaste, pure angel, with the gloriously beautiful face, to whom Christ speaks a kindred language—and, in contrast with all this, the unsuspecting, ignorant children who, unconcerned about the great events, the mighty passions and overmastering emotions astir around them, play quietly

with their shell—the impression which this poetic composition, glowing with the vivid colors of a Titian, produced upon us is not easily described. We stood a long time before the painting, unable to express in words our admiration of the masterpiece.

At last I asked the pastor, who had remained modestly at the back of the church, busying himself with various trifles, if he could not tell us the name of the artist who had created this beautiful work.

“I really cannot give you his name, I know only that he was a young Italian. But I see that the painting has deeply impressed you, so you will probably be interested in hearing some partic-

ulars of its origin." Accepting the kind clergyman's invitation, we went back with him to his house, and, over a glass of wine, he related the following story :

"Péteri formerly belonged to an old count, the last scion of an ancient noble family, who died, childless, about thirty years ago. His estates went to a distant relative and, in this way, our village passed into the possession of a young married couple, who came here soon after the death of the old lord, to make it their permanent residence. Herr von F., our new lord, had been an officer for several years, but after his marriage had retired to private life. His wife was young, bright, gracious, and possessed beauty un-

rivaled far or near. They had scarcely moved here before Frau von F. noticed the dilapidated condition of the little church, and determined to have a new and handsome building erected at her own expense. The fact that she was a Catholic, while the parish was Protestant, did not disturb her in the least.

“It happened about this time that a carriage passing through the village was overturned, and the traveler within had his foot severely injured. Herr von F., who had heard of the accident, went himself to the injured man and invited him to be his guest until he was able to continue his journey. The offer was gratefully accepted, and the gentleman was

carried to the castle. He introduced himself to his hostess as an Italian artist, on the way to visit his friend, the owner of an estate a few miles away, but who had been prevented from carrying out his plan by the upsetting of his carriage and the wounds received. The artist probably found his stay here very pleasant, for, though at the end of a few days he could walk without assistance, he made no preparations for departure. Under the pretext that he wished to express his gratitude in this way, he begged his charming hostess to allow him to paint her; he wished to leave the portrait in the castle as a memento. After some little reluctance, the pro-

posal was accepted, and the young artist now had an opportunity to gaze into the lovely woman's eyes an hour a day. She was, as has been said, a rare beauty, he was young and ardent—what marvel that he became passionately in love with her?

“The farther he progressed toward recovery, the more his depression increased; this, and the numerous sittings, aroused Herr von F.'s suspicions and one day he entered unexpectedly when the artist and his wife were alone together. He saw the youth on his knees before her, weeping bitterly, while she, bending over him, was trying to comfort him. The scene which followed was brief but terrible.

F. rushed upon the Italian and dealt him a blow in the face. The insulted youth seized a rapier hanging on the wall, pressed furiously upon his host, and would have killed him if the unhappy wife had not thrown herself between them. At the noise servants rushed in, who seized the raging artist, thrust him into the traveling carriage into which the horses had been hastily harnessed, and advised his coachman to drive to his destination, wherever that might be.

“The affair caused great excitement at the time; Herr von F. refused to accept a challenge sent to him from Pesth, and his wife, for a long period, sought refuge on a secluded estate.

“About five months after the scene just described, a box arrived containing the altar painting and a letter, in which the artist entreated Frau von F. to think often of him as an unfortunate man, who had seen the sun of his life rise once for a moment only to lose it forever. He also asked that the picture might be placed in the newly-built church, which, after much opposition from the owner of the estate, was done. The beautiful woman whom you saw in the foreground of the picture is Frau von F., the youth with the folded arms is the artist himself.

“Heaven knows that the young couple did not have a single happy hour afterward. A dark

suspicion, though a wholly groundless one, rested on the husband's heart, and this, with the gossip of the people, made the poor, beautiful wife utterly wretched. When, after a few years, she became a widow—I came here just at that time—I often saw her, when the church was empty, kneel before the picture for hours, shedding burning tears. She did not remain here long, but withdrew to her lonely estate, whence she often comes to the village, and never neglects to visit the church.

“Nothing more was heard from the artist himself, who disappeared without leaving a trace, only some of the owners of the neighboring estates, who knew him, said that

he had gone to Africa as a missionary and vanished there."

We thanked the pastor for his story and set out on our way home.

END.




A CHRISTMAS EVE IN PARIS.

It was Christmas Eve of the year 1874. We were slowly pressed forward by the human tide constantly surging to and fro upon the broad pavement of the Boulevard des Italiens. Often it was scarcely possible to pause a moment in front of the brilliantly-lighted show windows of a shop, to admire, here the diamonds, yonder the bronzes and ivory carvings displayed within. But one exhibit attracted us too strongly to pass it with a hasty

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glance. We checked our steps, which produced the same effect as when a drifting log suddenly grounds across a stream. First there was a violent shock, then an angry murmur, an excited chattering, and the stream gradually turns aside and flows in a slight bend around the obstacle which cannot be swept away.

The articles in this show window, which belonged to a fashionable confectioner, were far too tempting. A Christmas Fair, a veritable paradise for children: miniature Hussar boots, cradles, tiny champagne bottles, bombshells, burning logs, a poodle dressed as a waiter, with a napkin at his neck, all made of sugar and executed with Parisian dainti-



ness, and in the midst of this French fiddle-faddle stood the sturdy, simple German pine tree.


"Is the Christmas tree much used in French families?" I asked my companion, Monsieur G., a Paris architect, who has recently won much renown.

"I think not," he replied, "but I have always had my *arbre de hoël* in my own house, and it is the central point of one of my most sorrowful memories."

A mournful expression shadowed his mobile features as he spoke, and a heavy sigh escaped his lips. We went on and, a few steps beyond, turned into the "Rue du 4 Septembre." I did not wish to interrupt my friend's deep reverie by obtrusive, curious questions, so

for a short time we walked silently side by side. It was he who interrupted this pause by voluntarily telling his sad story.

“Four years,” he began, “have passed since that terrible winter, but everything is still as vividly impressed upon my mind as though it had happened only yesterday. The Prussians had forged their iron ring around the city, and we breathed more and more heavily. The whole world knows the epic of that siege, from its commencement to its close. In the beginning ‘useless mouths’ were banished, and the assurance was given that those who remained need have no anxiety about suffering want; first we ate pork, then horse-flesh, and at the end of six



weeks the most incredible things supplied us with food. In addition, the winter was one of those severe seasons which we do not have once in a decade. The Seine froze, and loaded carts could cross the lake in the Bois de Boulogne. Our foes were warmly esconced in our country-houses, they cut down our groves and the trees in our parks to keep the flames on the hearths burning, and fed their camp-fires with our grand pianos and carved furniture. We had no woods to fell, and naturally were less ready to use our pianos for fire-wood than our enemies. The lack of fuel was really less keenly felt than the lack of food. All the wood and coal remaining in Paris was

purchased by the rich at fabulous prices, and the poor, nay, even the well-to-do classes had to shift for themselves. The proletarians succeeded in doing so without much difficulty. Our stock of absinthe was inexhaustible, unfortunately it was the only thing with which we were supplied for months or years; 'Une goutte' will fully compensate the Paris workman for the fire on the hearth or the warmth of the stove—but what was to become of our women, our children, who do not drink absinthe?

"It was comparatively easy for us men. We were all soldiers, we were daily occupied either in drilling within the city or in digging and building at the out-

works ; and that keeps one tolerably warm, I can assure you. But when we came home in the evening, we found a room cold and dismal as a vault, a black, fireless hearth, the children huddled under the bed-clothes, the wife muffled in cloak and shawls. We clasped cold hands and kissed cold lips, which had forgotten how to smile.

“So the Christmas festival approached. Did I say festival? Suffering and want had reached their height, and our eyes constantly saw too much blood flow to have the red hue in the calendar attract our attention. The poor children! The siege cut off even their pure, innocent pleasures ; there was no Christmas for

them that year. The first week in December my little Louise asked me if the naughty Prussians would let St. Nicholas into the city, and a few days before Christmas she anxiously asked the same question about the Christ child. Both times I answered that I was afraid this year neither St. Nicholas nor the little Christ-child could get through to the children who expected them, but next year they would doubtless make ample amends for it. Louise looked very sorrowful and was not easily comforted; it was so long since the last Christmas festival, and the next one would probably come no earlier than usual! But I could not help her; neither I

nor my wife were in the mood to prepare Christmas pleasures for the poor child.

“Nor was Louise in a condition to enjoy such pleasures. She had been ailing all the Winter and on Christmas Eve the illness broke out with alarming violence. She was tortured by attacks of convulsive coughing and in a high fever. We put the child to bed and sent at once for our physician. My wife was greatly alarmed, and I, too, awaited the doctor’s verdict with much anxiety. He came; we silently exchanged greetings, and he approached the little one’s sick bed. My wife and I in trembling suspense watched every line of his face, every expression of his eyes;

we scarcely dared to breathe. The doctor was an old and dear friend, and Louise was very fond of playing with him; this time, however, she did not recognize him, and thrust him back with her little hand as he stroked the hair away from her flushed face and felt her throbbing pulse.

“‘It is a long time since I have been here but, as you know, the numerous wounded men, the crowded hospitals,’ he said apologetically, as he watched the little sufferer.

“‘Of course, of course, but what do you think of our Louise?’

“The doctor forced a smile.

“‘It would not be difficult to give good advice,’ he said in a

tone whose lightness was evidently assumed. 'Louise has grown excessively thin since I last saw her; she must be better nourished. Under different circumstances I should say: give her chicken broth, eggs, do not let her go out of a moderately warm room, but now'—his eyes rested on a piece of bread which lay on the table, the bread furnished by the government, of which a clumsy wit said that it contained every possible ingredient, among others *even* grain. 'However,' he added after a painful pause, 'there will be time enough to nourish her better after the siege, which cannot last forever. What is immediately necessary is a cup of hot

tea, which must be repeated in two hours.'

"My wife cast a despairing glance at me, whispering with quivering lips, 'I have neither wood nor coal in the house.' A deathlike stillness pervaded the room, interrupted only by the gasping breath and an attack of coughing from the child. I cannot describe now what I felt at that moment, I only know that I would infinitely rather have been dead than alive. The doctor was the first to break the silence. He looked very grave as he said: 'The hot tea is indispensable; if you have no wood, no coal—not even any alcohol?' My wife shook her head mournfully. 'Has not some neighbor—?' (The

same answer.) ‘Well, then you must sacrifice some piece of furniture at once, for much depends upon this tea.’

“I instantly rushed into the kitchen, which no longer contained anything combustible, seized the ax, and was on the point of dealing a blow on the piano, my wife’s favorite instrument, but the only large article in the room, except an armoire, which contained little wood. During the last fortnight we had been obliged to use our furniture to supply the fuel for cooking, there was no attempt at heating! I was already lifting the ax, when my wife suddenly uttered a faint cry, seized my arm, and directly after rushed out of the

room, exclaiming: 'I have something!'

"Was any neighbor fortunate enough to have some wood? Did she expect to find a coal dealer's shop open at this hour and procure fuel there? I was not to remain in uncertainty long. Five minutes after, the door opened and my wife, her face radiant with joy, while tears of gratitude sparkled in her eyes, entered, carrying with both hands—last year's huge Christmas tree which, since the festival, had remained unnoticed in a corner of the attic.

"The whole terrible contrast between the present and the past suddenly rose before me as if sharply illumined by a flash of

lightning. There was the slender, beautiful pine, which twelve short months ago, so brief a span of time, a mere moment, looking back upon it, had formed the center of a lovely picture of family happiness! It was in that very room, a bright fire was blazing on the hearth, merry children were dancing and bounding around the table, a happy father and mother were smiling at the delight of the little ones; there was Louise, looking like an angel in her white dress, with a blue ribbon in her fair curls, her arms round, her cheeks plump, her dark eyes sparkling with joy, and, with her, two little playmates whom she had invited to the festival. They laughed and shouted

as if fifty invisible angels were laughing and clapping their hands with the children to fill the room to the utmost with mirth and childish glee. On the table had stood the magnificent Christmas tree, with tiny candles, gilded fruits, and tin soldiers glittering among its green boughs, soldiers in French, English, and Prussian uniforms. We jested and played and made merry until after midnight, till the children fell asleep from sheer happiness with dolls and soldiers from the Christmas tree clasped in both hands.

“Now, here was the same Christmas tree, withered, dry and dusty, its needles yellow, many of its boughs broken and drooping, others, instead of golden apples and

bonbons, bearing long trailing cobwebs, the room was cold, the fire dead, and Louise lay on her bed, her little arms emaciated, her little face thin and flushed by fever, racked by that torturing cough.

“Her mother’s entrance had attracted her attention, and she partially recovered her consciousness. Noticing the Christmas tree, she clapped her little hands joyfully. ‘Oh, the Christmas tree, the pretty Christmas tree!’ she exclaimed in a faint voice. Then, in touching words, she begged her mamma to light the pretty candles and hang the gold apples and the soldiers, only no Prussian ones, and to send for Mimi and Lolotte, they had been

good, and she, too, would be good in future, very good.

“I was on the point of doing a cowardly act; I longed to go out into the darkness, into the streets, the outposts, in order not to be obliged to witness this sorrowful scene; I wished that a shell might enter the house and put an end to everything. But, no, shells were not fired on the night when the foe was also celebrating the Christmas festival. I regained my composure with difficulty, and while my wife sat on the edge of the bed, with one arm round the child, softly singing songs, stroking and soothing her, I chopped the Christmas tree with trembling hands and lighted a fire.

“The dry needles crackled and snapped, blazing high aloft, a sweet, heavy aroma of resin pervaded the room, and the water in the pot began to sing and boil. The doctor had gone out, my wife was still whispering loving words and promises to the sick child, and while watching the flames, and preparing the tea, I thought: ‘I thank thee, I thank thee, thou blessed tree, which once made my child happy, and will now make her well!’

“The Christmas tree did not make Louise well. And since that time I have not needed one—she was my only child.”

THE STEPMOTHER.

AN OPEN LETTER TO FRAU I. H.

There are ideas which affect the mind, as the touch of a spider feels on the finger. They awaken horror, loathing, lasting discomfort. I fear that the conception "stepmother" is one of them. The word is uttered in our presence, and awakes in our souls a series of images, some painful, some repulsive; on the one hand is the poor motherless child in the care of strangers,


meanly clad, ill-fed, scolded, beaten, burdened with impossible tasks, who secretly steals out on Winter nights to its mother's grave, and there, with heart-rending sobs, calls to the snow-clad mound the reproachful question why she did not take her child with her, why she had left it alone in the world; on the other hand is the wicked woman, toothless, blear-eyed, with hooked chin and nose, which almost meet, fingers as bony as a skeleton's, who is happy only when she has devised some new torture, some new humiliation for her foster-child. How have these images entered our sphere of thought? Perhaps from fairy tales, perhaps from poems and stories, I don't know

myself. Not from experience, that is certain. Most of us have probably no knowledge of stepmothers, and those with whom we are acquainted do not bear the remotest resemblance to the idea which dwells in our minds. Yet the contradiction between preconceived opinions and the reality does not impress us, and we do not think of correcting the former by the latter.

The letter which you, madame, addressed to me a few days ago, for a definite purpose and in which, with noble excitement, you demanded justice for the stepmother, first led me to reflect, and I have now become aware of my prejudices, my cruel injustice toward one of the most

meritorious classes of the human race. You are right, the step-mother is a martyr. She is a sufferer, but no one pities her, a martyr who never receives the reward of canonization, a tragic heroine who never finds her poet. She has married a widower and enters her new home, where she meets a beautiful, sorrowful orphaned child. Her heart is overflowing with the noblest feelings. She will be a loving mother to the poor orphan, will kiss away the shadow of premature grief from the young brow! Fate was less kind to her than to her companions, who, during the first months after marriage, saw only the bright side of wedded life; pleasant wedding journeys, inex-

haustible proofs of tenderness, endless love tokens. She is obliged to learn, with the pleasant side of married life, its hardest duties, for which nature has given to others of her sex long months of preparation; she has become at the same time wife and mother. But what of that? With the enthusiasm of a young soul, in whom love for the child and the pleasure of acting a mother's part are a heritage of the female sex, she assumes her sublime task; she surrounds the child with solicitude and tenderness; she kisses it awake in the morning and sings it to sleep at night; she talks to it, plays with it, never loses sight of it. Under this warmth of affection the child instantly begins



to flourish, as the earth responds to the heat of the sun. It has the coquettish beauty of a wax-doll, its cheeks grow rosy, its eyes bright, its little arms round and plump, but no love beams in the eyes, the arms do not learn to clasp the neck of the stepmother, and the little mouth does not smile.

The stepmother is puzzled, and begins to reflect. Before her mind rises the scene when her husband first brought her to their future home and introduced her to the child with the words: "Baby, here is your new mamma; be good and obedient, and she will love you very, very dearly. There, now, give mamma a pretty kiss!" She had bent

over the child, and while pressing it warmly to her heart a tear fell on its little fair head. The child had stood motionless, with its eyes fixed on its toes; it had submitted to everything, but without a word of affection or even a kiss in response. This had chilled the young mother like an icy breath; the husband noticed or felt it, and said: "You know how children are; the poor thing is shy, she is so unaccustomed to see strange faces. But she will soon love you as you deserve." This had satisfied her, and she believed it. But now a year, two years had passed; the child must have become accustomed to the "strange face," it must have felt long

ago that the "new mamma" loved it very, very dearly! Yet it is as cold, as distant, as reserved, as on the first day. The stepmother looks tenderly at it, it lowers its eyes; she kisses it, it obediently offers its lips, but they are motionless; she speaks pleasantly to it, it maintains a sullen silence. The stepmother goes out with the child, everybody turns, admires its beauty, envies the woman who has such a treasure. Alas, this angel has a joyous glance for all except the stepmother, a gay, childlike laugh for every one save her. The beautiful child is only lively in the street, out of the house; at home it is sulky. Every act of kindness from a stranger is

eagerly and enthusiastically acknowledged, but the loving words of the foster-mother find no echo; they die away with no more effect than if they had been flung into the sea.

The stepmother, with deep sorrow, asks herself the cause of all this, and can find no answer. Poor woman! Busily, untiringly you weave your web of love around the heart of the child confided to you, and do not know that behind your back an evil Penelope sits, raveling at night what you have done during the day! First, there are the first wife's relatives; from devotion to the dead they are wicked to the living; whenever the child visits them it hears itself pitied;

it is told of its mamma, not the new one, for she is not its mother, but the old one, how differently she would have loved it, how differently she would have treated it; it is questioned about the stranger's acts, and whether she treats it kindly. Then there are servants, governesses, foolish strangers, who, partly to win the child's affection, partly from wretched sentimentality, which considers it noble and kindhearted to roll up the eyes and express pity where there is no cause for compassion—sing the same song to the little one from morning till night. It never hears itself called anything but "poor child! poor orphan!" It learns that it tells an untruth whenever it calls

its stepmother "mamma"; it is taught to play the spy, to suspect, to dissimulate; it is robbed of the frankness and guilelessness of childhood and accustomed to seek beneath its stepmother's words different thoughts, beneath her acts hostile motives. Poor child, in whose mind distrust is roused ere the judgment is formed! The mother denies it an apple because it has already eaten too many, and it feels sure that it is her malice which prompts her to refuse it the most innocent pleasure; the mother will not permit it to visit a friend because it has taken cold, and the weather is stormy, and it no longer doubts the enmity of this woman, of whom everybody tells it so much

evil. And now come Christmas gifts of fairy tales, which describe the wicked stepmother who thrice poisoned Snow-White, and the other one who killed her stepson and served him to the father on the dinner table, and if the child has previously doubted, it is now confident, for the book, printed, bound, and filled with pictures, cannot deceive! So it learns to hate at an age when it is our fairest privilege to love, and to doubt at a time whose happiness is implicit faith.

Can this criminal poisoning of the child's soul remain without influence upon the stepmother? I deny it. What can you expect? Even the noblest woman is mortal, and she has a still keener sensi-

tiveness to the return, or the failure to return her feelings than the rest of us. Categorical necessity was not created for women, it is hard enough for men. To fill a bottomless cask was rightfully considered by the subtle Greek the most terrible punishment which could be devised for women. In the bitter conflict with constant ingratitude, even the strongest sense of duty, the most self-sacrificing nobility, must finally succumb. We can give love only when, in some degree, we receive love in return. One-sidedness here leads finally to impoverishment, and at last the stepmother really feels for the child indifference, possibly aversion, or even hate.

When we have once reached

this point what a tragic picture unrolls before our eyes! When the stepmother married she made herself the priestess, who was to erect a new statue in a deserted temple, kindle a fresh flame amid the dead embers of a cold altar; she set herself the noble task of becoming a mother to the orphan, creating a pleasant home for a lonely man, bringing happiness and joy into a sorrowful family circle. And now, after years of humble, but heroic labor and exertion, amid which the bloom of her life has withered, here is the result; a cold-hearted child, whose soul is filled with hate and who is unspeakably poor and pitiable because she lacks the treasure of sunny memories of childhood, on

which we happier mortals can draw during a long life; a husband, whose home is distasteful because he cannot endure the silent reproach in the sad eyes of his child, and she herself, the wife, tortured by the most painful sting, bitter grief for a marred life, an object of aversion to her husband, her foster-child, the whole careless world! Who is to blame for such mournful results? The mother? The child? The father? Neither of the three. It is the fault of the senselessness and malice of prejudiced people.

This is the way in which the stepmother's life presented itself to me, and I wish that the whole world could see it with my eyes. Only how is the evil, when recog-

nized, to be remedied? You, madame, would fain see the books of fairy tales, with their Snow-Whites and wicked stepmothers abolished, or rather you would like to have these stories omitted from the volume. That would be desirable and useful, but I fear it is impracticable. Man is weak and irrational, and I confess that, notwithstanding its baneful tendencies, which I admit, I would not for the world see Snow-White torn from my own childish memories. I am afraid that it will not do to throw away, for the sake of stepchildren, some of the most precious pearls in the treasury of fairy tales. The wisdom and tact of the father, and the absolute sincerity of the step-mother can do more for the child,

One thing is especially necessary: the woman who resolves to undertake the thankless office of a stepmother must fully realize the magnitude of the task and the measure of strength which she can bring to the fulfillment of her arduous duty. She is to conquer a child's heart, which is defended by a strong garrison of hostile insinuations, and by constant watchfulness guard it against continual attacks; she must daily wage a fierce warfare against the stupid, the thoughtless and the wicked people, in which she will continually receive aching wounds; she must struggle and bleed for years, alone and unaided, but at last victory will be hers, for in the battle against evil and injus-


tice love always triumphs because it is the strongest of the three. If the future wife feels that her powers will not be equal to this conflict, then let her remain away from the house where children await a foster-mother; she would render it a hell for them and for herself. But if the goal seems to her attainable and the road not too rough, let her confidently take up the cross, for her reward will be rich and enviable. She will work miracles such as can be wrought by love alone. The children will gradually see the living image of the stepmother merge into the fading one of the dead mother, and will no longer be able to separate the

one from the other. They will always hold the stepmóther in grateful remembrance as the angel whom God sent to the languishing Ishmael, when poor Hagar could no longer obtain water for her child. Perhaps, in later years, when the second mother has followed the first, foolish people will speak in the customary way of stepmothers, in the presence of the children, whose heads already have the snow of years. Then they will—and, judging from your letter, madame, I think you, too, would do the same—then they will look upward with tearful eyes to the portrait of the dead stepmother, whispering: “Forgive them, for they know not what they do!”

“PAS DE CHANCE!”

The dissecting room in the old Hôtel Dieu, in Paris, which was torn down in the year 1877, was a strange and gruesome place. To reach it, one was obliged to go upstairs and down, past the wards occupied by the sick, through spacious, lofty vestibules, echoing corridors paved with tiles, turning now to the right, now to the left, and across covered wooden bridges, spanning the little arm of the Seine which flowed between the two buildings

of the hospital, and, after a walk of many minutes, finally descend into the spacious subterranean chambers, which were the most ancient portion of a structure erected many centuries ago, and dating from the early part of the Middle Ages. On reaching the foot of the worn stone steps leading to the dissecting room, one found one's self in a narrow, unpaved outer cellar, lighted by a grated window above, and containing at one end a low, rusty iron door as broad as it was high. A person familiar with the place opened this door by turning a rude handle in the center, which moved a heavy, creaking double-bolt inside, and entered a low vaulted chamber about fifteen



paces long and ten wide, which was very insufficiently lighted by two square grated windows, which pierced the thick wall directly under the vaulted ceiling, and which could be opened only when the Seine was low. The cellars of the Hôtel Dieu were below the surface of the river, from which it was separated by its strong walls, overgrown with moss and blackened by age, and when it rose ever so little, one could look from the lower portions of the windows of the dissecting-room several inches into the turbid waves of the river. Usually several gaslights burned here, filling the place with a bright glare, in which human beings and all objects assumed un-

pleasantly sharp outlines and a livid, disagreeable color, while dark shadows, like silhouettes, were thrown upon the floor and walls. But it was a fitting illumination of the place and its contents. The blackish-gray walls were always covered with a clammy moisture, which, on the side facing the river, gathered here and there into thick drops, that slowly, gradually trickled down on the slippery, dirty marble floor, and suggested, even to the observer least susceptible to sentimental fancies, the sorrowful impression of tears, held back by a strong will, yet slowly oozing forth. On the windowless side of the room was a wash basin set in the wall, supplied with a faucet

and waste pipe. Several pieces of soap lay on it, and, upon a nail at the side, hung towels of doubtful cleanliness, and a dilapidated yellow tablet which contained, in faded letters, the rules of the dissecting room. On the opposite side six tables were ranged in a row, above each of which a gas jet descended from the ceiling; the first, of the usual shape, held a pair of scales and a number of rusty weights. The brass balances, soiled with horrible fat and blood stains, showed the purpose for which they were used—the weighing of diseased portions of the human body. The form of the other five was peculiar. The top was long, narrow, slightly concave, like a trough covered

with tin, a little inclined, wider at the upper end than at the lower, where it was perforated by a hole leading into a metal pipe, which discharged its contents into a tin pail standing under the narrow end of the table. These were the dissecting tables, "Morgagni's tables," as we used to call them in our technical jargon. Upon them, surrounded by knives, scissors, chisels and hammers of singular form, lay cold, rigid human forms, in which the disciples of science searched with sacred curiosity to surprise, in the mysterious depths of the organs, the secret of life. On the wall at the head of each table hung a little blackboard, on which was fastened a label bearing the name, age, and

date of death of the body beneath. At the back of the dissecting room was a glass door, opening into an adjoining chamber, much smaller and lighted only by a single window. Two laths, painted black, formed a cross extending from the floor to the ceiling on the side wall, and several roughly-made coffins stood on the floor, which was thickly covered with aromatic pine shavings. This was the death chamber. After dissection the bodies were brought here, wrapped in a linen sheet supplied by the hospital, and laid in the coffin to await burial. If within the next twelve hours relatives came to claim the body, it was delivered to them; if not, it was conveyed the following morn-

ing in the hearse to the overseer of the poor, and buried in the paupers' ground in the cemetery of Père la Chaise. The only living creature in these uncanny rooms, during the time when no dissections were being made, was a beautiful white cat, which sprang gaily to meet every one who entered and, mewing and purring, pressed and twisted around him, and the master of the affectionate creature, a little, thin, one-eyed old man, who coughed continually and had lived here thirty years, yet in the midst of the scene of constant sorrow and destruction, in which he worked, maintained so cheerful a spirit that he was always humming a gay little song while preparing the bodies for dis-

section, or washing, sewing them up, and wrapping them in sheets after it. He assumed a serious, nay, even melancholy mien, only when the relatives of any corpse came to carry away their dead, for during the many years of his sorrowful occupation, the worthy man had retained sufficient courtesy and consideration not to wound the feelings of the mourners by displaying a face of business-like indifference or of cheerfulness.

Most of the physicians and students who visited the Hôtel Dieu were in the habit, at the close of the morning call, of going down to the dissecting room to see "what there was new." In the same way the ha-

bitué of the theater, after witnessing the performance, goes on the stage to cast a glance behind the scenes. One morning in May, 1877, following this custom, I entered the subterranean chamber just described. The cat was sitting in the corner, washing her fur, old Jean was busy with some empty coffins in the death chamber, one of the dissecting tables was empty, while on the other four lay subjects. Around the first body, that of a strong old man, who had died of a brain disease, stood a group of young people, some with white aprons and blood-stained hands, others with hats on their heads, gloved hands, and cigars in their mouths, eagerly discussing the ravages which the

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knife had just disclosed, and the phenomena caused during the progress of the illness. At the second and third tables the work was already done. A hasty glance at the cruelly emaciated bodies and the organs on the table sufficed to reveal the cause of death. "Consumption!" It is so common a disease, the ravages it produces in the organism are so often seen, that people do not linger over it. So I passed on without delay to the fifth table, the last in the row, and perceived that it contained a corpse still undisturbed, the sight of which instantly filled me with sympathy. It was the body of a woman, very young, and of remarkable beauty, whom death must

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PRO-
DUCE

have snatched away in the midst of health. No long sickness could have preceded it, for the outlines of the form were full, round, almost sensuous; illness had had no time to caricature the noble lines of the figure by the ugly angles of emaciation. The skin, in spite of the horrible chill which it sent through the whole frame to the heart at the lightest touch of the finger-tips, was as smooth and fine as velvet, and the hue so dazzlingly white that it had the iridescent tints of mother-of-pearl. The features of the oval face had assumed, in the last agony, an expression of suffering which death had stereotyped. The lips were slightly parted, revealing teeth which resembled transparent

white enamel. The dark eyes were wide open, and the dull, glassy pupils gazed at me with the leaden stare of a corpse. The shining black hair was gathered at the back of the head into a knot held by several pins, which were half slipping out, and a few waving locks still rested lightly on the smooth brow, as an unsuspecting little child plays happily around its dead mother. The shadows of death shrouding the beautiful form had not wholly effaced the bloom of youth. As it lay in its chaste, pure, classic loveliness, one might believe that he had before him a Greek statue carved from Parian marble. To examine the body on all sides I walked

around the table and, in doing so, made a discovery which increased the interest already awakened by the mute, rigid form. The right arm of the corpse bore on the upper surface several tattooed inscriptions. I read in one line: "Marie Balok," below the date "1876," and below this, in a third line, the words: "*Pas de chance!*" (No chance.)

"*Pas de chance!*" It seemed as if these words contained the sorrowful index of the hapless human life, which a few hours before had found its pitiful end in a hospital bed. The label at the head of the table informed me that "Marie Balok" had been the name of the body and that she was not more than seventeen.

Old Jean, in reply to my questions, could tell me that the beautiful Marie had been brought to the hospital the night before and had died a few minutes after. She was at a dancing hall in the outer boulevards, and, from jealousy, made a furious scene with a young man; in the midst of the outburst of her rage she suddenly sank fainting; when they were unable to revive her by dashing cold water on her and using scent bottles, two of her women friends put her into a carriage and brought her to the hospital, where they gave the physician on duty the explanation Jean repeated. The girl had died without recovering her consciousness, and early in the morning she had been

brought down to the dissecting room.

This much the label and old Jean could tell me. But far more than either was revealed by the words tattooed on the girl's arm: "*Pas de chance!*" I had before me the title of a biographical romance, and, with little difficulty, read in the dim eyes, on the pale lips and snow-white form of the corpse the romance itself from the first to the last chapter. Marie Balok, her name proved it, was the child of foreigners, who had come to Paris as ten thousand other foreigners do every year to seek a more favorable place for the battle of life. Her father was a workman in Belleville, or on the slopes of Montmartre. Marie

had grown up in dirt and poverty, played during the day in the dust and the gutters of the streets of the suburb, and at night went home to find a crust of bread and a pallet in the corner of the room with her parents. She was ten or eleven years old when the insurrection of the Commune occurred. Her father put on the uniform of the insurgents, her mother followed the battalion as a vivandière or a nurse. Eight or nine weeks passed like a whirlwind, and ended with her mother's leaning against a wall one beautiful May morning and being shot as a petroleuse, and her father's first being driven to Versailles with blows from the butt ends of muskets, and then sent to New Caledonia.

Marie was left alone in the world, without relatives or acquaintances, like a young swallow thrust from the nest, which must perish miserably in the dust unless Heaven works a miracle in its behalf. The beginning of this miracle was apparently wrested from iron-hearted fate. Marie neither starved to death in summer, nor froze during the following winter. A family of work people, poor and wretched themselves, received the still poorer and more wretched child, and gave it a seat at the scantily spread table and a place on the floor of the bare room. It learned to do something, sewing, embroidery, or flower-making, and soon earned so much that it was no longer compelled to ac-

cept the favors of the kind-hearted neighbors as alms. Thus Marie spent several years until she had become a blooming, beautiful girl of fifteen. People cannot be beautiful, young, and poor in Paris, unpunished. A temptation sprang from every stone in the pavement, and the finger of evil beckoned to her at every street corner. Soon she no longer went to her work alone, nor returned home without a companion. She found it inconvenient to live with her benefactors, and one day left them to go to a garret room in a shabby house in Montmartre, with a lover in blouse and silk cap. Now, scarcely beyond childhood, she began to lead the life of a soli-

tary Parisian working girl. Toil during the day, in the evening a ball, the cancan till midnight, blows from the friend, hunger, rags, misery, singing and merriment, and withal, total forgetfulness of the past and the future. If a friend carried palpable jealousy too far, she dismissed him unceremoniously with a scornful shrug of the shoulders, and sought another, with whom she remained until the vague, burning longing for happiness and contentment, which filled her heart, urged her once more into new and unknown paths.

It was in the summer of the year 1876 when, one Sunday, she went on an excursion to St. Germain with the friend whom she

was making happy by her affection. These summer Sunday excursions to the charming places near the city are the object of longing to all Parisian workwomen, who go fairly crazy with joy when they have the prospect of skipping about on the grass during a whole warm, sunny day, gathering flowers, catching butterflies, and singing sentimental songs in the arbor of a country tavern over a bottle of wine. Marie had been gay to the verge of recklessness all day long, had laughed and chattered and sung till she was hoarse and thirsty; in the evening she found herself, with her friend, in a restaurant of St. Germain; they were alone in the tavern, and emptied one glass

after another of the cheap wine of the neighborhood. The friend, who had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves to cool himself, was tattooed on the arm like most Paris workmen. There, in various colors, was a flaming heart, two hearts transfixd by a huge arrow as if on a spit, and several names, dates, and inscriptions, such as "Ever Thine!" or "Faithful unto Death!" Marie saw these signs and figures, and a reckless thought darted through her mind. "Tattoo my arm, too!" she cried, and the workman, bursting into a loud laugh, asked what he should tattoo. "First, my name; so that I can try whether it hurts."

No sooner said than done.

Some indigo was quickly obtained, Marie had a needle, and the workman went to work at once. At every prick Marie uttered a faint cry and shrank away a little, but in the pauses she laughed and drank, and the workman did not stop until in large, distinct letters appeared the name: "Marie Balok."

"Shall I tattoo anything else?"

"Yes, the date."

Five minutes after the date, "1876," was inscribed beneath the name. While the workman was rubbing indigo into the little wounds, from each of which a tiny drop of blood was oozing, the landlord brought in a fresh bottle of wine, and Marie soothed the slight pain of the operation

with another drink. The man eyed his work approvingly, and then asked:

"Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, my dear fellow."

"Don't you want to add something to it? A name and a date—that's silly. We'll make it more amusing. Shall I draw an emblem?"

"No."

"Or a motto?"

"Stop, you're right. A motto—that's it. But what shall it be? Let me think."

The workman proposed some of the usual amorous phrases, but Marie would not accept them. The usual relapse had followed the exuberant mirthfulness of the day, and she now sank into a melan-

choly reverie. Perhaps, for the first time in her life, she looked back upon her past and found it miserable beyond measure. A wicked fairy seemed to have sat beside her cradle. Every phase of her existence appeared to be under the influence of a curse. Born in poverty, orphaned, growing up in penury, living in shame, vegetating without a future, without a purpose, without pleasure,—this was her past, her present, her future destiny, and her eyes involuntarily filled with tears, as she examined this dark, hideous picture, destitute of light and beauty. And when her friend roused her from her sorrowful reverie with the exclamation: “Then find a motto yourself, if you don’t like

mine!" She condensed the substance of her life, as it presented itself to her mental vision, into a phrase which, in this application, lost its triviality, and charged itself with profound desolation as if with electricity, as with a sorrowful smile she said to the workman: "Tattoo *Pas de chance!* That is the real motto of my life."

No chance! It was not only the motto of her life, it was also a prophecy. Poor Marie was to have no happiness to the end. Barely seventeen, in the dawn of her young life, only a few months after she had had the sorrowful, resigned motto inscribed upon her arm, she died in a hospital bed. This was the story of beautiful Marie, as, standing beside her life-

less body, I imagined it. Was it really her history? I cannot warrant it, but it is probable. But it is certain that the lovely young girl lay dead before me on the table, and that on the pearly skin of her plump, nobly-moulded arm, as if written in blue, phosphorescent characters by the finger of a malicious demon, were the words: "*Pas de chance!*"

The dissection showed that Marie had suffered from a defect in the valvular action of the heart. This explained her sudden death in a moment of passionate excitement. I waited until all was over, the other physicians had left the room, and old Jean came forward with his big needle and coarse woolen thread to at-

tend to the body. Now I closed the beautiful Marie's open eyes, still staring at me with a strange, vacant glance, and slowly withdrew. As I closed the heavy iron door of the dissecting room behind me, it seemed as if, from the last table at the end of the hall, a faint, ghostly voice whispered in my ears: "*Pas de chance!*"



HOW THE FOX HUNTER FARED IN ENGLAND.

Baron K. is one of the pleasantest young fellows I ever met. In fact, he possesses the rarest combination of all the qualities which cannot fail to make a man the favorite of every circle. He captivates women by his twenty-five years, a handsome, slender figure, expressive dark eyes, and a coquettish little moustache; men he wins by the chivalrous frankness of his nature, and his heartfelt and therefore contagious

cheerfulness. He speaks several languages with great fluency, is an admirable conversationalist, who would appear to advantage in any Parisian drawing-room; he dances admirably, sings well in a fine baritone voice, plays excellently on the piano, and does not easily find a rival as a horseman, fencer or shot. Aristocratic birth and a fortune which, according to Continental ideas, is considerable, placed him from early youth in a position which enabled him to develop his social talents and put his light into a suitable candlestick.

I made his acquaintance in London, in the spring of the year 1874. He had apparently given himself up completely to

the swelling flood-tide of the "season," and let it bear him unresistingly away. His days and nights were spent at the clubs, in Hyde Park, at dinners, theaters, and evening parties. He was rarely in any costume except a dress suit and a white cravat, and if any one wished to be sure of finding him in his elegant lodgings in Bruton street, he was obliged to go there between five and eleven o'clock in the morning and feel no hesitation about rousing him from his sleep. An introduction from his ambassador, Count B., secured him admittance to the best circles, and there were few of the most prominent families where he could not be found at least once a fortnight, singing

Hungarian folk songs, playing the czardas, and awakening universal enthusiasm. The "nice Hungarian" often formed the subject of very animated conversations between young and older ladies, and once, when contrary to English custom, he appeared in the drawing-room of Alderman Sir Frederick Fr. in the rich, gold-embroidered uniform of a Honved Hussar lieutenant, he created the greatest sensation, and even a young Tamil prince who was present, attired in a gay silk caftan, with a girdle of gold brocade and a cachemire shawl turban, in which blazed a magnificent ruby, could not divert the attention of the company from our baron. Though the favorite

of so many circles, received everywhere with open arms, and loaded with half a dozen invitations for every evening, Baron K. showed a very marked preference for the home of Mr. George F.

The master of the house, a member of Parliament for one of the central counties of England, is one of the most eminent sportsmen in the country; he has broken all his limbs, and once very nearly his neck, in fox-hunting, won the Queen's cup at Wimbledon, was one of the champions of his county versus the neighboring one, at cricket, fifteen years ago, and if he did not conquer, it was only because he had the misfortune of being

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pitted against the champion of the United Kingdom ; but to succumb with honor to such an antagonist is more glorious than to conquer a Mr. Nobody. Mr. F.'s library contains all the numbers of the *Field* bound in handsome volumes ; he has a copy of the first edition of Isaak Walton's superb book on angling, obtained at an auction of Christie, Mason & Co.'s for 115 guineas, and in his private reception room, besides a fine collection of dog and horse whips and pretty models of saddles of every form, the eyes are specially attracted by a large number of fox brushes tastefully arranged, the most precious trophies of as many hunting seasons, in which he took

part as one of the most esteemed sportsmen.

It is apparent that Mr. George F. is a sufficiently interesting person for it to be perfectly natural that Baron K. should *préfer* him to many others, but I do not believe that it was the master of the house who attracted our friend so often to the elegant residence on Albion street. Mr. F. has a daughter, a charming creature of nineteen, slender and pliant as a reed, with the roseate complexion which Nature bestows on English women in their cradles as an enviable gift and a national inheritance, and sparkling blue eyes, into which one cannot look without instantly feeling the most intense poetic sentiments.

There are satisfactory reasons for the assertion that Miss Bridget, not her papa, was the great magnet of the F. household for our friend. The relation between Baron K. and the F. family soon became one of great intimacy. The young Hungarian and the beautiful Bridget F. rode together alone in Hyde Park ; in Drury Lane, and at Her Majesty's Theater they were always in the same box, in going to Ascot Baron K. did not fail to accompany the F. family ; in short, no one could doubt that their intercourse meant something more than the mere acquaintanceship of fashionable society. In fact, Baron K. had already made Bridget a formal declaration of love ; she had asked

him, in the usual way, to speak to mamma, at the same time assuring him, with a lovely blush, that she would not fail to support his wishes, and papa had already taken one step: he had closely questioned certain persons, to whom Baron K. introduced him, about his family and his position at home. Fortune played no part in the affair, for Miss Bridget, according to the statements of well-informed people, was "worth 18,000 a year"—ten times as much as the baron possessed.

The happy suitor now withdrew more and more from general society, in order to devote himself exclusively to Bridget, he could already venture to say *his* Bridget.

He spent all his evenings with her, and went to entertainments only when he knew that she would be present also.

One evening, as had so often happened of late, he was taking tea with the F. family. No one was in the drawing-room except the father, mother, and daughter, and our friend. The conversation turned upon sporting matters, and Mr. F. asked if there was any fox-hunting in Hungary.

“I should think so!” exclaimed Baron K. eagerly. “Foxes are as numerous in some parts of our country as hares are here! I myself shot five specimens of Mr. Charley in a single day.”

“What?” cried Mr. and Mrs. F. in the same breath, the former

starting from his rocking chair, the latter dropping her tea-cup, while Bridget could not repress a low cry of terror.

Baron K. was silenced by bewilderment, and a brief, painful pause followed. He could not imagine what there had been in his words to produce so startling an effect upon his hearers, and hit upon the luckless idea that they perhaps suspected him of exaggeration. So, after a few minutes, he added somewhat timidly: "You may believe me, I have shot five foxes in a day and, in a battue, even more!"

"Oh!" said Mr. F., and made no farther comment. Bridget cast imploring glances at the speaker, which caused him still greater

embarrassment, because he did not understand in the least, and Mrs. F. rang for the servant to remove the fragments of the cup. Poor Baron K. did not know what to think. He ventured to ask Mrs. F. what had startled her so, but received only the reply, accompanied by an icy glance. "Oh, nothing, a little nervousness, but it's over now." Mr. F. suddenly remembered that he must read the long parliamentary report which had been sent to him that day, and even Bridget remarked that she had a headache. It was impossible not to understand. So Baron K. bade them good evening, and retired, but was not a little perplexed when he saw that Mr.

F. did not shake hands with him, and the lady of the house did not, as usual, invite him to come again soon.

The young man set out on his walk home with a heavy heart and a whirling brain. He was in no mood to seek other society, though it was only eleven o'clock. So he strolled about the park for an hour, pondering with the utmost earnestness, with all his penetration, over the incidents of the evening, yet without being able to obtain the least clue to the mystery. It was barely midnight when he sought his couch, but he tossed about in his spacious bed, which was almost as large as a bedroom of moderate size on the Con-

minent, until morning dawned, without finding sleep.

The next day he reached a decision. He would go to Mr. F. and ask openly, frankly, and without circumlocution, for an explanation of the scene of the previous evening. He waited in feverish impatience until one o'clock, and the hour had scarcely struck when, though not without hesitation, he let the "knocker" fall on the metal plate of the well-known door in Albion street. The footman opened it. His face wore a peculiar expression as he said that—no one was at home. "Not Mrs. F.?" "No one." "Nor Miss F.?" "No one, sir. I've already said so twice." "And

when will they return?" "Oh, that's hard to tell. Not to-day, nor to-morrow. Who knows."

Baron K. cast a contemptuous glance at the lackey, and went away. But he could not help feeling the bang with which the footman closed the door as an insult. What was to be done now? He must have a clear understanding at any cost. Entering a stationer's shop at the corner of Oxford street and Park lane, he wrote a few hasty lines to Mr. F. The London mail is prompt and punctual. An hour and a half after, the postman's familiar double knock echoed on Baron K.'s door; the housekeeper brought in a letter, which he snatched from her hand in the utmost excite-

ment, only to drop it the next moment, fairly stupefied. It was his own note, on whose back Mr. F. himself had written: "Not accepted. Return to Baron K."

An hour after the poor young fellow was seated in the elegant reading room of the Army and Navy Club, into which a friend had introduced him as a guest for several weeks; he held in his hand the last number of the *Echo*, but, instead of reading, he was gazing into vacancy. His frank countenance showed mental agitation which even a dull eye could not fail to notice. At this hour he was almost alone in the spacious apartments of the aristocratic club, and, consequently, almost unobserved. But he did

not remain solitary long. One of his most intimate friends, Captain W., entered, looked around in search of acquaintances, and as soon as he saw Baron K. came up to him, shook hands, and exclaimed loudly: "What brings you here at so unusual an hour, old fellow?" But, glancing keenly at him, he instantly added in an altered tone: "How you look! Are you ill? Is anything wrong?"

The other burst into a peal of angry laughter as he replied: "Not ill, but crazy. If, perhaps, I am not already, I soon shall be! But Heaven sends you to me; perhaps you can give me some explanation. Listen. Yesterday evening I was at Mr. F.'s."

"I know," interrupted the captain, with a significant smile.

"Well, I was at Mr. F.'s. We were talking together in the pleasantest manner about various matters; I told him that, in Hungary, I had shot five foxes and even more in a single day—"

"What?" exclaimed the captain, sharply. "You mean killed!"

"Why yes, killed, shot dead."

"Oh! I see," answered the captain, in a voice whose chill fairly froze the marrow in K.'s bones, and, without another syllable, he turned on his heel, went to the next table, took up a magazine, and walked slowly to an arm-chair.

K. looked after him a moment with dilated eyes and open

mouth, then, reaching his side at a single bound, he grasped his shoulder with a trembling hand and fairly roared into his ears :

“You too ! This is an actual conspiracy ! But you must give me an explanation, you shall not escape.”

The captain looked at the excited young man before him with the cold apathy of the Englishman, shrugged his shoulders, and answered very calmly :

“I don’t wish to have anything to do with you, sir.”

The two or three men who were in the room began to turn their heads toward the pair and, when K. continued to demand explanations from Captain W. in vehement tones, the latter quietly

left the apartment, while the poor baron remained a prey to the most conflicting emotions. He let himself drop into an armchair, buried his face in his hands, and thought of nothing at all. But he was not to retain this position long undisturbed. Scarcely ten minutes had passed ere a servant entered, stopped before K., and, with a courteous bow, offered him a note on a silver tray.

Baron K. opened it ; it contained only the following words, very hurriedly written :

“ Upon an oral report made by Captain W., the secretary of the Army and Navy Club begs to inform Baron K. that he shall not be considered any longer the guest of our club.”

Baron K. did not utter a word, but convulsively crushed the note, thrust it into his pocket and left the room.

He went directly to the embassy, where he found a young friend, whom he entreated to aid him in an affair of honor. But the other, shrugging his shoulders, said that he could not serve if the person to be challenged was an Englishman. Besides, he must be on his guard, for the authorities here understood no jesting in these matters.

Baron K. went out with his wrath unappeased; he had only one thought—vengeance. Captain W. was an officer and a member of the Horse Guards, he could not avoid giving him satis-

faction. Without troubling himself any farther about seconds, he went home and wrote a letter, in which he challenged him to meet him with arms in his hands unless he desired to be declared a miserable coward and chastised in the public streets. The letter was posted, and Baron K. felt somewhat calmer. He spent this evening at home, for he had a secret hope that Captain W. would answer at once. But half-past nine o'clock came, the last double knocks echoed and died away in the street, but this time none sounded at his door. The next morning also the expected reply did not arrive, but, late in the afternoon, he received an official document, summoning him

to appear the next morning at eleven o'clock before the Westminster Police Court, on pain of legal penalties, etc., etc.

Baron K. went from one state of astonishment to another; he no longer knew what to think of himself, the English, the world, and began to feel really ill. Under such circumstances the hours passed slowly enough, he naturally felt no inclination for society, and it seemed as if, in the last two days, he had lived ten years, when, punctually at eleven o'clock the next morning, he appeared before the alderman who acted as judge in the Westminster Police Court. He had not long to wait. First a cabman was condemned to pay

four shillings and sixpence because he had charged a passenger three pence too much, then Baron K. heard his own name called. Advancing to the judge, he asked what was wanted. The judge showed him the letter which he had written to Captain W. and asked if he knew the epistle. K. assented. Did he acknowledge that he was its author? Another affirmative answer. Was it a jest, or had he been serious in the challenge and threats which the letter contained? Very serious, K. answered.

The judge then raised his voice, saying impressively :

“ I ought to condemn you, for disturbance of the peace and dan-

gerous threats, to three months imprisonment with hard labor, but in consideration of the fact that you are a young, ignorant, foolish foreigner, unfamiliar with the laws of the country, you need only pay a fine of fifty pounds sterling. You must, however, find two persons who will give bail that you will keep the peace for six months, and you must also keep in mind that if you utter even the slightest threat you will be sentenced to hard labor!"

A few days after the incidents related, I chanced to meet Baron K. in the Zoological Gardens, where, with a friend—an author who had traveled extensively and possessed much experience of the world—I was inspecting some ani-

imals which had just arrived. I thought that K. was greatly altered and told him so. He laughed bitterly, and answered:

‘ Pray don’t ask me to tell you the reason, otherwise the same thing might happen which has already befallen me twice.”

But as I urged him, he at last resolved to gratify my wishes. When I had heard the story as I have just related it, I stood still and stared at him in astonishment, as much bewildered as Baron K. himself. The English author who was in our company smiled in amusement and, after looking at the luckless young fellow a while, he said:

“Then you do not know that to shoot a fox, or to kill it in

any way except with a pack of hounds, horses, etc., is a far baser crime, in the eyes of the majority of my countrymen, than to steal a purse? You do not know that there is scarcely a gentleman in England who would give his hand to a man who had killed a fox with a bullet?"

We certainly had not known it, but it was true. Baron K. was now a wiser, but a sadder man. He left England soon after, and I shall not be surprised to hear that he does not express the kindest opinions of the island kingdom and its inhabitants.

WITHIN AN INCH OF ETERNITY.

The windows of the restaurant were open, and the cool, fragrant air of the spring night was struggling with the smoke-laden atmosphere of the room. A glance out of doors showed the azure sky and the brilliant full moon, whose glimmering bluish rays shone through the young leafage of the blossoming trees, which swayed gently to and fro before the windows in the light breeze. But nothing was more remote

from the minds of our circle, which met every evening at a certain table for social intercourse, than poetical ideas. The club, of which I was one, consisted principally of worthy citizens, who had a far greater liking for bright gaslight than for dim moonlight, and who appreciated the charms of a good supper much more than the spell of the loveliest spring night. The topic of our conversation was prosaic town gossip, which, as usual, gradually merged into foolish talk about politics or discussions concerning the Government, the theater, high taxes, and similar subjects. By a connection of ideas which I do not now recall, the question had arisen whether it was credible

that a person's hair could suddenly turn gray from violent mental excitement. Part of the company received the anecdotes current about such cases with slight doubts, while others most pitilessly derided persons who were simple enough to believe such nursery tales.

Just as the conversation became most animated, a man of unusual height and herculean frame, whom he had not previously noticed, rose from a side table and approached us. His intelligent features, which bore the stamp of resolution, seemed spiritualized by the large, kindly blue eyes. But the most striking peculiarity in his appearance was the snow white hair and the gray beard framing

his face, which, at the utmost, indicated an age of only thirty-five years.

“Pardon me if I enter into your conversation,” he said, bowing courteously. “You are speaking of a subject which greatly interests me. I myself am a living proof that terrible mental agitation really does exert the physical influence which you all doubt.”

His words awakened the utmost interest. We made room for him at our table, and, after he had taken his seat, unanimously urged him to tell us what had caused the whiteness of his hair.

The stranger feigned no undue modesty, but yielded to our entreaties and related the following story :

“If you have ever paid any attention to American affairs, the name of Auburn cannot be unfamiliar; it has about the same significance in the United States as Spielberg has in Austria. You must not imagine Auburn as an immense gloomy prison, a single large building, but rather a whole colony of criminals, a metropolis of the miserable outcasts of society. Inclosed by enormous walls, which rise menacingly to a considerable height above the plain, are a great number of single structures, houses which contain the cells of the prisoners, the residences of the wardens, barracks, hospitals, and workshops, all desolate and dreary, with here and there a bit of turf, a row of

trees, a bed of flowers, like an innocent memory of childhood among the evil thoughts of a criminal.

“Circumstances which I will not weary you by recounting had led me, after completing my education in my native city, Hamburg, to America, and after a brief time in New York I found myself prison surgeon in Auburn, which, as perhaps you know, is in the State of New York.

“I had charge of a part of the prison which contained the worst criminals, men, or, rather, human hyenas, to whom blood had ceased to be a very special liquid, as Mephistopheles terms it. Two, who were condemned to lifelong imprisonment in the institution,

and were distinguished among the others by great bodily strength, craftiness, and intelligence, had, in consequence of repeated bold and cunning attempts to escape, been placed under more rigid oversight than the rest. I had incurred their special hate because I had once caused the discovery of several iron tools, which—heaven knows how obtained—they had concealed under their clothing, and on another occasion discovered that they were shamming when, on the plea of illness, they desired to be placed in the hospital, probably because they hoped to find the conditions there more favorable for their plans of escape. The scoundrels were separated and heavily chained, but nevertheless

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one morning one and, a few days later, the other vanished, chains and all, without leaving a trace. About a fortnight afterward I went to Cayuga Bridge on some private business.

“It was noon when I reached the end of my ride, and I gazed with delight at the sunlit landscape before my eyes. Cayuga Lake, one of those which, with Lake Erie, form the network of inland lakes, lay before me in its peculiar loveliness. Between rugged, rocky shores, confronting each other like sullen foes, the long, narrow sheet of silver extended its clear surface as if striving to reconcile the two enemies who had stared defiantly at each other for centuries. Across

the lake, which is about forty miles long, and, at this point, a mile wide, the railway trains run on an immense wooden bridge, a marvel of American enterprise, which has a station at Cayuga Bridge, an insignificant village.

“My business was soon completed, and toward evening I set out on my way home. Are you familiar with the pleasure of a ride on a summer evening? Cayuga Bridge is surrounded by extensive oak forests, through which I had to ride a considerable distance. The huge, lofty trunks cast long shadows, and the tops rustled so softly that one rather felt than heard them. As I passed beneath these woodland giants, sweet

memories of my far-off home stole into my heart. Absorbed in thought, I loosened the bridle of my horse, which trotted slowly forward. I admired the bewitching blending of colors produced by the rays of the setting sun, as they shone through the dense, dark green foliage and seemed to kindle the edges of the leaves. Suddenly I was roused from my dreams by a rustling in the underbrush on both sides of the road. I seized my pistol and turned quickly, but at the same moment received a terrible blow, which deprived me of my senses. True, I opened my eyes once more and fancied I saw indistinctly, as if in a dream, one of the escaped criminals bending

over me, then darkness shrouded my mind.

“It must have been late at night when consciousness returned. I opened my eyes and saw above me in the deep blue sky a radiant full moon. A dull, heavy sensation in the back of my head made me try to put my hand on the aching spot, but I discovered that I was bound hand and foot. Gradually I collected my thoughts, remembered the attack by highwaymen, and a terrible foreboding, which made my heart stop beating, darted through my brain. I felt that I was laid across two sharp parallel projections, which pressed against me most painfully and, listening intently, I heard, far below me, a faint splashing noise.

There was no doubt—I was lying across the rails of the Cayuga Bridge, bound, unable to move, with the terribly certain prospect of being cut into three pieces by the next train.

“I almost lost consciousness again. But I soon recovered my composure. Then I tugged desperately at my bonds till they almost cut my muscles, shrieked, and at last wept like a child. I tried to roll myself into a different position, and remembered that an incautious movement would hurl me into the silent waves of the Cayuga—bound hand and foot, motionless as a stone.

“I shuddered and lay still. But not long. The light of the large, to me, fearfully brilliant moon,

the plashing of the water below, the wind blowing softly, then the deathlike silence again, rarely interrupted even by the distant note of a bird—all became unendurable and inspired me with unspeakable terror. And the rails! The rails! My senses tortured me. I could not escape them. The wooden beams of the bridge trembled almost imperceptibly from the washing of the water. I imagined I felt the approach of the train and my hair bristled; the wind sighed a little louder, I fancied I heard the dull panting of the engine and my heart stood still, only to throb the next instant with such dreadful speed that the pulsations were almost audible.

“There are some things, gentlemen, which are totally incomprehensible to me; one of them is how I survived that night. One thought stood distinctly before my mind. I must endeavor to work myself into another position—if possible, get into the space between the rails—if I was not, perhaps the next moment, to become the victim of the most agonizing death.

“And I succeeded! I strained every muscle, every sinew to the point of breaking. I writhed, I twisted, I panted, my head seemed bursting, and, after tremendous exertion, which appeared to me to last an eternity, though perhaps it was only moments, I found myself in the hollow between the rails.

“Was I safe? I had not time to consider or rejoice in my new hope, for all my vital powers were concentrated in the single sense of hearing. In the far distance I distinguished, at first vaguely, then more and more distinctly, the regular, monotonous, dull noise which is produced by the engine of a moving locomotive. The awful silence of the night merged minute by minute into the still more awful, confused jarring sounds, the rattling and groaning, rumbling and panting of a locomotive, which was rushing forward at the mad speed of American trains. A thousand feet more, five hundred—all the terrors of the infernal regions assailed me, but not a muscle

moved; I lay as if turned to stone. I tried to shriek, but did not even hear my own voice; how should it reach those on the train?

“Now, for an infinitely brief space of time, I fancied that I saw a bright light, a blast of hot air fanned me, then suddenly darkness shrouded me, I heard a thundering roar as though the very heavens were falling.

“Close, very close, barely an inch above, the monster dashed over me—I was safe. Still half unconscious, I heard a deafening rumbling and clattering, and saw shadowy masses flit by; there was another moment of mortal dread—the hook of a chain which hung lower than the rest caught

me, dragged me along a few feet and finally tore a large piece from the breast of my coat, releasing me—then every object danced around me, the moon, the bridge, and the high bank whirled in a giddy maze above and below me, and my senses failed.

“When I regained my consciousness I found myself in my bed, with familiar faces around me. To make the story short, I had been picked up the morning after that terrible night by a signal man, recognized, and taken to Auburn. A violent fever kept me for a fortnight within the shadow of death, but my strong constitution conquered. When, after my recovery, I looked in the glass for the first time, I saw

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what traces those moments had left upon me."

The physician paused. His pallid face, the expression of horror in his eyes, the perspiration which stood in large drops upon his brow, showed how vivid must be his remembrances of the scene, and how greatly the narration had exhausted him.

Gradually the breathless anxiety with which we had listened to the story related with such graphic power passed away, and cheerfulness returned.

Then we paced to and fro for a long time in the moonlight, in the garden behind the tavern, listening to the doctor's tales of less harrowing experiences in the young land of liberty, wonders, and adventure.

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